

The English Martyrs School and Sixth Form College

Catcote Road, Hartlepool TS25 4HA

Inspection dates

17–18 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not sustained the pupils' good rates of progress seen at the time of the last inspection. Standards fell sharply after that time and have yet to recover fully.
- Pupils' progress from their above-average starting points into school has not been good enough, particularly in science. This is also the case for the most able pupils and disadvantaged pupils, including middle and high prior-attaining disadvantaged pupils.
- Despite recent improvements, the quality of teaching has been too variable across and within subjects and classes over time. Consequently, not all pupils achieve as well as they should.
- Teachers do not challenge poorly presented and sloppy work consistently.
- Some teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are too low. Some do not use assessment information they have about pupils' current skills and abilities to plan learning that meets their needs sufficiently well. This means that work set is sometimes too hard for the least able pupils and too easy for the most able.
- Support for pupils who require additional support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities is inconsistent, resulting in varying rates of progress over time.
- Until recently, absence and temporary exclusion rates for disadvantaged pupils have been too high.
- The headteacher's reports to directors contain insufficient information about the progress of disadvantaged pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- Directors and governors embrace the headteacher's vision for improvement. Actions they are taking are making a positive difference but it is too soon to see their full impact.
- The sixth form is good. Improvements to the quality of provision are ensuring that current students are making good progress in their learning. Progress in art is excellent.
- The Catholic ethos lies at the heart of the school's work. It promotes pupils' personal qualities and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development successfully. Pupils feel safe, are polite and usually behave well.
- Strong careers advice and guidance contribute to the high proportion of pupils moving on to their chosen destinations successfully.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eradicate the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning in subjects and classes across the school so that all pupils can achieve their best by ensuring that:
 - the good practice currently in the school is shared more widely so staff have a clear understanding of what is expected of them
 - teachers use the assessment information they now have about pupils' current skills and abilities to plan work that is matched well to pupils' starting points
 - teachers have consistently high expectations of what their pupils can achieve
 - poor-quality work and presentation are challenged routinely.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and governance by ensuring that:
 - senior and middle leaders are held to account fully for the achievement and progress of all their pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - staff use the new assessment systems more consistently to plan learning that deepens pupils' knowledge and understanding
 - the monitoring and challenge roles of senior leaders and the special educational needs coordinator are developed further to ensure that the additional funding for these pupils is well spent
 - directors receive regular information about the progress, attendance and achievements of disadvantaged pupils so they can challenge where weaknesses are identified and make sure that the additional funding for these pupils is better spent.
- Build on current strategies to reduce further the differences between the levels of absence and temporary exclusion among disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Following the last inspection, leaders did not act quickly enough to ensure that areas requiring improvement were tackled fully and that pupils' progress and achievements remained good. The progress of disadvantaged pupils, although improving, and the variability in the quality of teaching remain key barriers to the school's success. Despite becoming an academy in April 2014, not enough was done by the trust to make the governance arrangements fit for purpose until the headteacher's arrival in September 2015.
- The first priority of the new directors and headteacher was to ensure that the school operated within the constitutional requirements of an academy. The roles and responsibilities of staff were restructured, in part to tackle a budget deficit. Identifying what was working well and what needed to improve was also a priority. As a result, work to secure improvement did not start in earnest until autumn 2016.
- Leaders' accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses was translated into a clear school improvement plan. Actions being taken are making a positive difference to the quality of teaching and, consequently, pupils' learning and progress in lessons. However, it is too early to see the full impact of these and to ensure that actions are having a consistent impact across year groups, groups of pupils and subjects.
- The quality of teaching is improving due to targeted support plans for those who need extra help, and training and development activities. Staff recognise the usefulness of the training and support they receive. Leaders know that the good practice seen in some departments is not shared widely enough.
- Middle leaders and staff are being held to account more rigorously. This includes through leaders' increased monitoring of learning in classes, scrutiny of pupils' work and clearer expectations in the arrangements to manage staff performance. However, senior leaders' monitoring and evaluation of the impact of their departments' work are not consistently sharp. They do not act as a cohesive team with a shared responsibility for whole-school improvement. This is contributing to the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and the variabilities in pupils' progress.
- The curriculum is broadly based. Students in the sixth form are able to take qualifications matched to their personal interests and ambitions. The curriculum is enriched well by a range of extra-curricular activities. Opportunities like Outward Bound experiences in the Lake District build pupils' team-building skills, confidence and enjoyment of school. Sixth form students take on leadership roles including supporting younger pupils and being student ambassadors. This helps to develop their leadership skills as well as adding to the cohesiveness of the school community.
- Careers advice and guidance are strong, independent and influential in supporting pupils and students to make successful decisions about their futures. Work-based learning experiences and close partnership working with universities, local colleges and the business world raise pupils' aspirations and develop their confidence and skills. This ensures that students move on successfully to their chosen next steps.

- The increasing use of small-group interventions before and after school is helping pupils at risk of falling behind in their learning to catch up with their peers. This work, together with additional lessons in English and mathematics in the nurture room, is ensuring that the catch-up funding for Year 7 pupils is used wisely to aid improvement in their literacy and numeracy skills.
- The additional resource for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not used as effectively. This is because teachers do not ensure that work is matched to their needs consistently. The special educational needs coordinator and senior leaders are developing strategies to monitor and challenge the impact of the funding on pupils' learning and development more robustly but plans are in the early stages. That being said, support for Year 11 pupils who required an education, health and care plan last year resulted in their good achievements.
- The use of pupil premium funding has not been effective. Recent strategies including small-group work and targeted support is, in the main, diminishing the differences between their achievements and those of other pupils in the school. Leaders and directors know there is much more to be done to make sure that the differences are eradicated. This is particularly the case for the disadvantaged pupils who entered the school with middle or high prior attainment.
- Pastoral support and the moral, ethical and shared values of the Catholic faith build pupils' personal qualities well. Pupils become resilient, articulate, self-assured, confident and caring young people during their time in the school. They develop a good understanding and respect for people of different cultures, religions, personal qualities and lifestyles. This contributes to their strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Collectively, this work develops successfully the qualities pupils need to be active, thoughtful citizens as they move into the world beyond school.

Governance

- Upon their constitution, directors and the local governing body 'hit the deck running' in getting to grips with their various roles within the scheme of delegation and in developing the skills of challenge as well as support to leaders in the school. Minutes of the directors' raising achievement meetings show the robust challenge they are bringing progressively to bear when they identify weaknesses in the school's performance.
- The headteacher's reports are increasingly informative. Directors are starting to receive in-year assessment information about pupils' progress in different year groups across a range of subjects. However, directors have yet to receive similar information for disadvantaged pupils. This limits their ability to hold leaders to account for the progress disadvantaged pupils make, and to know whether the pupil premium funding is being well spent.
- Directors and local governing body representatives share fully the headteacher's vision for improvement. They are very clear about their different roles in the school and are carrying them out with diligence and a passion to ensure that pupils thrive and achieve their best during their time in the school. Their scheme of delegation has not identified clearly enough who is responsible for making sure that the school's website is up to date. Directors are taking action to tackle this anomaly.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have ensured that all staff have up-to-date training on all aspects of safeguarding and child protection. They are alert to the many different types of abuse, neglect and risks to pupils' safety. They know what to do when they have concerns. Referrals to the designated leader for safeguarding are prompt. School leaders and directors are vigilant in ensuring that staff appointed are suitably cleared to work with the pupils. Recruitment procedures are robust. Pastoral staff work closely with pupils and their families in times of need. They also work closely with local authority early help teams and other relevant agencies to secure timely support when required. Despite this good work, the school's child protection policy has not been updated to fully reflect the Department for Education's most recent requirements or the up-to-date knowledge and understanding of staff.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Over the last year, leaders' work to improve the quality of teaching and effectiveness of assessment is making a positive difference to the learning and progress of pupils. Leaders' now regular reviews of learning and scrutiny of pupils' work have identified the improving picture. However, they have also identified that there is still too much variation in the quality of teaching between and within subjects, classes and year groups to ensure that all pupils achieve well from their above-average starting points.
- There are strengths and weaknesses within the same subjects. For example, the high-quality and engaging learning seen in some mathematics, health and social care, geography and English lessons was not seen in all. In a few mathematics lessons for lower age groups, expectations were too low. Teachers did not notice when low-ability pupils struggled with a concept, nor provide work that challenged the most able. Poor-quality work or shoddy presentation in pupils' books was not challenged sufficiently.
- Teachers' use of the recent assessment information about pupils' current abilities to plan activities that deepen their knowledge and understanding is improving but remains inconsistent. This means that sometimes the work set is too hard for some pupils and not challenging enough for the most able.
- Recent seating plans identify pupils who require additional support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, on occasions, teachers do not adapt learning to meet these pupils' needs sufficiently. When this happens their progress slows. The small number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities with an education, health and care plan are supported more effectively and most make greater gains in their learning as a result.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to their learning are generally positive. Relationships between pupils and staff are cordial. Pupils come briskly to their lessons and are well prepared: no small feat in such a sprawling school site. In many lessons, pupils contribute to discussions thoughtfully and respond articulately to teachers' questions and requests. They work diligently in groups or when working on their own. Occasionally, pupils' attention wanes and they become passive and disinterested. Even so, they generally remain polite.

- Pupils have opportunities to read each day, for example through 'drop everything and read sessions'. This is ensuring that they continue to hone their literacy and communication skills as they move through the school. Those who need extra help with their reading and comprehension are provided with support in the nurture room or in additional intervention activities at the start of the day.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The development of pupils' personal qualities and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development lies at the heart of the school's ethos. The religious education curriculum, assemblies and tutor time, together with the school's focus on personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), develop pupils' skills and understanding well.
- Displays on walls and corridors show a clear ethos of celebration of achievement and effort. They also showcase the range of work pupils undertake to develop qualities of respect, tolerance and support for others. Their charity work is notable, particularly their work for their major faith charity and for The Gambia.
- The pastoral team knows pupils well and provides sensitive support in times of need. Pupils feel safe and are safe. They move around the long narrow corridors and spaces maturely and sensibly. Pupils are taught well about risks to their safety and potentially dangerous or tricky situations online, and in their local and wider communities.
- Pupils have a good understanding of types of bullying including prejudice-based bullying. A small proportion of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, consider that bullying is not tackled well in the school. A few pupils reported that bullying does occur, mainly name-calling. Virtually all pupils reported that once an adult is informed it is dealt with robustly. Leaders use tutor time and assemblies to make sure that pupils remain well informed about what to do when they have concerns.
- Most parents and pupils are positive about the care and support pupils receive. Since his appointment, the headteacher has developed a parent forum to enable parents to help shape policy and to develop stronger partnership working with them. Work is taking place to improve the website. Leaders are developing a communication 'app' for parents to download so they can have 'real time' information about their children's achievements and work in the school.
- The PSHE curriculum contributes well to the development of pupils' personal qualities. Leaders are aware that the use of tutor time for this work is at risk of leading to patchy provision. They are taking action to strengthen their approach across the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils report that the headteacher has raised the bar of expectations and pupils and staff are generally rising to it. The more rigorous approach led to a spike in temporary exclusions last autumn. Rates are falling as the strategy becomes embedded. This is also recently the case for the rates of temporary exclusion of disadvantaged pupils. Rates between these pupils and other pupils in the school are reducing but leaders know there is more to do to reduce them further.
- The small proportion of pupils who experience difficulties managing their behaviour at times attend 'the Bridge' for short periods. Pupils are well supported by enthusiastic staff who work closely with them in a calm, restorative way. Pupils continue with the work they would undertake in class and they report positively about the support they receive. This includes time to discuss any concerns or difficulties that they may be facing.
- Attendance rates are average. Persistent absence rates are now below average due to the timely work that pastoral staff do to support pupils at risk of not attending. Strong partnership working with parents and other agencies is helping to improve the attendance rates of pupils who face challenges in their lives. Actions taken this year are contributing effectively to the reducing rates of absence of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, but there is still some way to go to eliminate the differences completely between these groups and other pupils in the school.
- A tiny number of pupils attend alternative provision off-site approved by the local authority. Here these pupils follow vocational courses matched to their planned career routes. Pastoral staff keep a daily check on their attendance and work closely with the provider and parents when pupils are at risk of not turning up. However, checks to ensure that the pupils complete their planned English and mathematics work during their time at the provision are not as rigorous. Leaders are taking action to tackle this.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because not enough pupils make sufficient progress from their starting points on entry into the school in key stage 3 to the end of key stage 4. In 2016, attainment in Year 11 was slightly above average overall. Attainment of girls was stronger. However, pupils made less progress across a range of subjects than that found nationally given their above-average starting points on entry into the school. This was particularly the case in science, English and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils, in particular of middle and higher ability, made much less progress than other pupils nationally. The small proportion of pupils who had an education, health and care plan for their special educational needs and/or disabilities achieved well. Actions taken following departmental reviews of all subjects are showing better impact in English. There is still work to do to ensure that leaders and teachers of science and mathematics are pulling their full weight so that all pupils make good progress in their learning from their various starting points.

- Observations of learning and review of the school's assessment information and pupils' books show that, currently, progress is hastening in many lessons and subjects but still remains patchy across the school. Leaders have prioritised the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, particularly pupils of middle and higher ability. Work is ongoing to diminish the difference between the progress of these pupils and other pupils in the school. Current assessment data shows some success, particularly in English. However, it is too soon to see the full impact of leaders' endeavours.
- Extra support for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who are at risk of underachieving across all year groups is now in place before and after school. There is also additional work to make sure that the most able pupils are being challenged more successfully. Support for Year 11 pupils is helping to prepare them more effectively for their examinations. Leaders are taking action to ensure that class teachers plan work that meets pupils' individual needs more consistently. This is particularly the case for pupils who require additional support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Carefully targeted support for pupils who have an education, health and care plan to meet their special educational needs and/or disabilities is more effective and, as a result, these pupils make generally good progress in their learning.
- The school's previous specialism as an arts college stands out. Pupils gain a good grounding in a range of media, and the required skills, knowledge and techniques during their early years in the school. They emerge as confident and creative practitioners across the range of two- and three-dimensional work they choose by the end of their studies. High-quality ceramics, paintings, photographs, sketch books and drawings fill the corridors and art rooms.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- In 2016, students' academic attainment was broadly average. Students' progress from their starting points on entry into the sixth form to the end was slightly below average. Progress of the small proportion of students taking vocational subjects was slightly above average. Leaders recognise that although this was an improvement on 2015, it is still not good enough. Actions taken this year have had a positive impact on improving students' learning and progress. Retention rates have been low between Year 12 and Year 13 but more students are on track to remain this year.
- Students benefit from greater consistency in the quality of teaching across subjects in the sixth form than in key stages 3 and 4. Although there is still some variation across subjects, differences are not as pronounced and students' work in books and folders is often of a good quality. Their art and photography work is of high quality.
- Relationships between staff and students are strong and this promotes students' confidence to ask questions and check their understanding or misconceptions in an atmosphere of trust and respect. Learning is usually typified by teachers' good subject knowledge and expertise. Work planned is usually personalised to each student's needs, based on their prior learning and the assessment criteria for the courses they study.

- Teachers' questioning techniques are generally used effectively to strengthen understanding. Teachers often challenge students to think deeply about their learning and apply their knowledge to the demands of the different examinations they will take.
- Students are overwhelmingly positive about their experiences in the sixth form and the support they receive. They appreciate the feedback they get on their learning, which is particularly strong in subjects such as history and geography. Timetabled 'study support' sessions develop effective study habits, and one-to-one support helps students who are struggling to catch up to where they should be.
- The curriculum is broadly based so that students can take their chosen courses. The curriculum includes a range of work to ensure that students know how to keep themselves safe from risks to their safety and well-being. The curriculum is also enhanced well by the many opportunities to expand their horizons and raise their aspirations.
- Independent careers advice and guidance are strengths. Close partnership working with universities, local businesses and visitors from a range of professions supports students in the decisions they need to make for their future careers. Leadership roles such as being student ambassadors or supporting younger pupils, alongside fundraising for local, national and international charities, build students' confidence and skills. They also help them to support communities in need. Collectively, this work promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Students are confident, articulate and caring young people who are well prepared for their next steps and to be active citizens in modern Britain today.
- Leaders have had greater success in ensuring that students entering the sixth form without a grade C in English gain this benchmark than they have had with students without a grade C in mathematics. Not enough students gain a grade C in their mathematics examination at first resit.

School details

Unique reference number	140867
Local authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	10032038

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,513
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	272
Appropriate authority	The Holy Family Academy Trust
Chair	Mrs Gillian Proudlock
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Hammond
Telephone number	01429 273 790
Website	www.ems.hartlepool.sch.uk
Email address	admin@ems.hartlepool.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about pupils' attainment and progress at the end of key stage 4 and key stage 5, or enough detail about the 16 to 19 programmes of study.
- The English Martyrs is a much larger than average secondary school.
- An average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding.

- The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority communities is below average.
- Overall, a lower than average proportion of pupils have been identified as requiring additional support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of Year 7 and Year 8 pupils requiring such support in the past two years.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and are supported with an education, health and care plan is half that found nationally.
- The school has developed a provision in a group of classrooms called 'the Bridge'. This is for pupils who are temporarily experiencing difficulties in managing their behaviour. Pupils are supported by a dedicated team of staff and they attend for short periods.
- The school uses Total Training, a vocational training provider for a very small number of pupils who attend on a full-time basis.
- The school became an academy in April 2014. It is currently the only academy in the Holy Family Education Trust. Its governance arrangements were changed in the autumn term 2015 when a board of directors and local governing body were constituted.
- A new headteacher was appointed in September 2015.
- In 2016, the school met the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all phases of the school and in a variety of subjects. School leaders joined inspectors on a number of visits to lessons. Inspectors looked at pupils' work during lessons and spoke to pupils about their work.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and senior leaders, middle leaders and a group of staff. Inspectors also met with two directors and two representatives of the local governing body.
- Inspectors spoke informally to pupils across the two days of the inspection. They also spoke to three groups of pupils formally on day two.
- Inspectors took account of the 52 responses to Parent View and 16 written parental comments.
- A range of documents were reviewed. These included key documents regarding the school's approach to safeguarding, the school improvement plan, the headteacher's reports to directors and the local governing body, and the school improvement partner's recent reports. School assessment information about pupils' current learning and progress was also reviewed.

Inspection team

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