

The English Martyrs School and Sixth Form College

Catcote Road, Hartlepool TS25 4HA

Inspection dates

2–3 July 2019

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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving, but remains inconsistent within and across a range of subjects.
- Pupils are making stronger gains in their learning more recently. However, differences in the quality of teaching in key stages 3 and 4 mean that pupils' progress is not consistently strong.
- The curriculum is increasingly ambitious. However, at times, leaders' decisions in relation to the key stage 4 curriculum and rationale for examination entry have had an inequitable effect on pupils' outcomes.
- Some teachers do not plan sufficiently well, or with consistency, to meet the needs of pupils from their different starting points. Furthermore, some teachers' use of assessment lacks precision in some lessons. Disadvantaged pupils and the most able do not achieve as well as they should.
- Over time, pupils' progress in English, science and humanities has been weak. Furthermore, disadvantaged pupils have fared particularly poorly, when compared to other pupils nationally, in these subjects and others. Consequently, additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is not used effectively.
- Persistent absence is declining. Nevertheless, rates of persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils continue to be much higher than for other pupils nationally.
- Directors and members of the local governing body (governors) do not hold leaders to account well enough.
- Leaders' plans to improve the school lack focus. When the time comes to evaluate the effect of leaders' actions, it is not as straightforward as it should be. Some areas for improvement, highlighted at the previous inspection, remain unresolved.

The school has the following strengths

- The quality of provision in the sixth form is good. Teachers' planning is effective, and students are making stronger progress as a result.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are cared for well.
- The proportion of Year 11 pupils and sixth form students who progress to the next stage of their education, employment and training is very high.
- Pupils behave well. The vast majority of pupils demonstrate consistently positive attitudes to learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching, learning and assessment, so that all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and the most able, make at least good progress, by ensuring that teachers:
 - plan learning activities that are more closely matched to pupils' starting points
 - make effective use of the additional pupil information provided to them by the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo)
 - provide pupils with incisive feedback
 - demonstrate consistently high expectations, ensuring that pupils of all abilities are challenged appropriately
 - familiarise themselves with the content of the key stage 2 curriculum so that they can build on what pupils know and can do when they join the school in Year 7
 - develop pupils' learning resilience, by providing them with opportunities and the freedom to learn from their mistakes.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and governance by:
 - ensuring that additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used effectively
 - improving communication between leaders and staff, so that early signs of disadvantaged pupils underachieving can be discussed and planned for swiftly
 - refining written plans to improve the school, by including more exact actions and clear success criteria that can be evaluated more definitively
 - ensuring that directors and governors challenge senior leaders thoroughly, especially in relation to the recurring issues that remain from the previous inspection, such as the underachievement of disadvantaged pupils and the variability in the quality of teaching
 - reviewing the key stage 4 curriculum and rationale for examination entry to ensure that all pupils have the same opportunities to learn new skills and improve their knowledge and understanding.
- Continue to reduce rates of persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils.

External reviews of governance and of the use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have been relatively successful in their quest to strengthen the quality of education pupils receive. Since the previous inspection in 2017, the quality of teaching has started to improve, school policies are applied more consistently and, more recently, pupils' outcomes are on the up. However, leadership and management require improvement, because some significant weaknesses remain. Disadvantaged pupils still underachieve, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment continues to vary across the school and, although improving, pupils' progress across several subjects is below average.
- Senior leaders' plans to improve the school are too cumbersome. Plans lack precision, and success criteria are not quantified exactly. Consequently, it is difficult for those with responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the success of leaders' actions to make an informed judgement regarding leaders' achievements.
- Additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is not used effectively. Over time, disadvantaged pupils' progress has been significantly below that of other pupils nationally. There are signs that this is beginning to improve, particularly since the appointment of a leader with responsibility for disadvantaged pupils' education. Leaders understand more clearly now the barriers to learning that disadvantaged pupils experience. As a result, leaders' strategies to support disadvantaged pupils are more effective this year. However, lines of communication between leaders and the subject-based 'pupil premium champions' are, currently, blurred. Leaders are not always informed of recurring patterns of underachievement or specific subject-based issues a disadvantaged pupil may be experiencing. As a result, the progress of current disadvantaged pupils across the school is impeded.
- Nearly all staff who responded to Ofsted's online inspection question say that they are proud to be a member of staff at English Martyrs. Furthermore, most staff say that the school has improved in the last two years. However, a significant minority of staff do not feel that the school is well led, or that leaders use professional development to encourage, challenge and support their improvement.
- Over time, leaders have entered some key stage 4 pupils for additional qualifications without providing them with sufficient learning time to cover the subject's content in detail. The vast majority of pupils entered for these examinations have been disadvantaged pupils. Nevertheless, pupils have attained well. This has supported recent improvements in pupils' outcomes but has also masked, in some instances, the general underachievement of disadvantaged pupils across a range of subjects. Leaders' decisions in this regard have had an inequitable effect on some pupils' learning. This is because most non-disadvantaged pupils have not been entered for the additional qualifications, some of which improved pupils' understanding of personal finance or information and communication technology.
- Pupils' attainment on entry is above average. Consequently, leaders have designed and implemented an increasingly academic curriculum. More pupils than ever before are learning subjects belonging to the English baccalaureate subjects (EBacc). These include subjects such as English, mathematics, science, humanities and an ancient or

modern foreign language. Leaders share the government's ambition to see 75% of pupils studying the EBacc subject combination at GCSE by 2022, and 90% by 2025.

- Leadership of SEND provision is increasingly effective. The SENCo is knowledgeable and acutely aware of pupils' additional learning needs. Much has been done recently to improve teachers' understanding in this regard. The SENCo provides teachers with very detailed pupil information, allowing teachers to plan lessons that more effectively meet the needs of pupils with SEND. While this is contributing to improving the quality of teaching, not all teachers use this information wisely, or at all, when they are planning lessons. This adds to the inconsistencies in teaching, learning and assessment across the school.
- Subject leadership is improving. Senior leaders, directors and governors regularly ask subject leaders to attend meetings with them, so that they can explore how well pupils are doing in each subject or year group. Subject leaders say that this is helping to sharpen their understanding of what is working well and what is not. Subject leaders also say that, this academic year, they feel as though they are being held to account more than they have been in the past.
- Senior leaders are outward facing. They seek advice and support from a wide range of external partners. Following the previous inspection, senior leaders were swift to broker additional support from another local authority, a national leader of education and additional experts in the field of education. Since then, professional relationships have been developed and partnerships strengthened. This provides senior leaders with 'a fresh pair of eyes' and the direction they need, in some instances, to improve the school further.
- Leaders have been successful in improving consistency in the application of most school policies. For example, teachers now assess pupils in the same way. Schemes of work have been improved to ensure that the work pupils are asked to complete is more challenging than before.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. Leaders are steadfast in their belief that pupils should learn and grow in a way which is 'founded on truth, built on justice and animated by love'. Pupils regularly explore different religions and take part in student council activities. The vast majority of pupils are considerate of their peers, often demonstrating genuine care and compassion for others.

Governance of the school

- Directors of the trust and governors meet frequently. Meetings are quorate and the minutes of the meetings are detailed, providing a comprehensive record of what is discussed. Some directors and governors also attend sub-committee meetings to explore in more detail leaders' work relating to finance, curriculum, school improvement documentation and pastoral issues.
- Directors and governors have a stronger understanding of pupils' progress and attainment than they did previously. They have worked with senior leaders to ensure that the assessment information they receive is clear, and in a format that directors and governors can understand. Notwithstanding this, scrutiny of the minutes from trust meetings highlights that directors and governors are too accepting of the information

that leaders provide to them. Leaders are rarely questioned in detail about the recurring underachievement of disadvantaged pupils or pupils' weak progress in English, science and humanities over time. Directors and governors only occasionally delegate actions to leaders, set deadlines for tasks to be completed or make clear that they expect to see improvements against clear and precise criteria or performance thresholds.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils move around the school building and site sensibly and they are effectively marshalled by staff, who are out and about often.
- Leaders make appropriate pre-recruitment checks to ensure that staff are safe to work with pupils.
- Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding are experienced. They attend regular safeguarding training and events that help them to stay up to date with all matters concerning pupils' safety and welfare. Leaders are closely involved in the induction of new staff. Consequently, staff who are new to the school are familiar with safeguarding systems right from the off.
- Pupils know how to stay safe. They have an appropriate awareness of the risks they might face when using the internet. Pupils know who they can speak to if they have a worry or concern. Pupils say that they feel safe while they are at the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Although improving, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently strong across a range of subjects and year groups. Some teachers' expectations vary. Assessment does not sufficiently inform teachers' planning, and pupils sometimes cover old ground without developing their understanding further. Consequently, teaching, learning and assessment require improvement.
- Leaders have worked hard to ensure that teachers follow a consistent approach to assessing pupils' work. Pupils and teachers are now more accustomed to the school's style and incidence of assessment across the academic year. However, while teachers now follow the school's assessment policy consistently, the quality of teachers' assessment varies. Some teachers do not support pupils well enough by identifying repeated errors in pupils' work or addressing pupils' common misconceptions swiftly. Furthermore, the feedback that some teachers give to pupils is not sufficiently incisive to allow pupils to improve their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Teachers are becoming more adept at planning to meet the needs of pupils from their different starting points. However, some teachers do not use information relating to pupils' prior knowledge and understanding, or their additional learning needs, to plan learning activities that allow pupils to flourish. Consequently, pupils are sometimes asked to complete tasks that are too demanding or not demanding enough. Additionally, although teachers sometimes provide pupils with optional 'challenge' tasks, designed to deepen their understanding, some pupils fly under the radar and

choose not to complete the work and the additional learning sometimes fails to challenge pupils in the manner it was supposed to.

- At the last inspection, teachers were asked to improve pupils' written presentation. Teachers have been successful in doing this. The vast majority of pupils' work is neatly presented, complete and organised effectively. However, in some instances, pupils and teachers place too much emphasis on standards of presentation, at the expense of learning. This was exemplified in one lesson when a Year 10 pupil was overheard informing the teacher that she could not complete the examination question she had been set because she was too busy improving how she had presented her earlier written work. Very few workbooks demonstrate that pupils learn from mistakes. They are not willing to give things a go, for fear of messing up their book. Pupils' resilience in this regard is not as strong as it could be. This is because pupils seldom experience failure or discover what it takes to respond to it.
- Teachers provide pupils with regular opportunities to reflect on their work and that of their peers. Typically, pupils are keen to do this. Pupils are becoming more confident when assessing their own work against set criteria and model answers. Pupils work together well in pairs and groups. They enjoy sharing their learning and supporting their friends to do well.
- Leaders expect all teachers to be leaders of literacy. Across a range of subjects, teachers usually identify and help pupils to address common spelling errors and use correct grammar and punctuation when writing. This is contributing to improved standards of literacy across the school. However, some disadvantaged pupils in key stage 3 require additional support with their writing. This is needed to ensure that they spell subject-vocabulary accurately and use unfamiliar terminology routinely.
- The importance of reading is promoted well across the school. Pupils read regularly. They are supported successfully by teachers to improve their reading comprehension during designated reading lessons, and because of some strong teaching in English. For example, in a Year 8 English lesson, pupils were reading 'Wonder' by R J Palacio. During the learning activities, the teacher skilfully questioned pupils to check their understanding and to ensure that pupils understood ambitious vocabulary such as 'nauseous'. Consequently, pupils were engaged, enthusiastic and eager to play a part in their learning and that of their peers.
- Teachers who are new to the profession say that they are supported effectively. They appreciate the numerous opportunities to learn from more experienced colleagues during mentoring sessions, training, observations in lessons and feedback from staff following their own teaching.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Careers education is strong. The knowledgeable and enthusiastic leader of careers has successfully developed a cohesive and progressive curriculum. Lessons and activities ensure that pupils receive independent and targeted careers education based on an analysis of their future career aspirations. An extensive number of professionals work

with pupils throughout the year. Additionally, pupils gain practical experience by taking part in mock interviews, workshops and careers weeks. At these times, normal lessons may be suspended, providing pupils with more time to focus on a particular aspect of careers education or vocations which interests them. Pupils have a thorough understanding of the skills and qualifications they need to progress to their next steps in education, employment or training.

- Pupils say that bullying is rare. The school's own information and records of homophobic behaviour, racism or sexism demonstrate that incidents are infrequent. Pupils treat each other with respect. Pupils are confident that, should a pupil be bullied, staff would take it very seriously and resolve issues quickly. Pupils say that incidents some pupils classify as bullying are, in fact, simply a minority of pupils calling others unkind names. Furthermore, pupils say that discriminatory language is not tolerated and that, as with bullying, staff challenge pupils in this regard.
- The small number of pupils in Year 10 who attend alternative education provision are well cared for. They follow appropriate courses that meet their needs well. Leaders ensure that they check on pupils' progress and welfare routinely. All the pupils in alternative education provision learn basic English and mathematics skills, and a small minority learn new employability and outdoor education skills. Pupils in alternative education provision make appropriate progress from their different starting points. This serves them well, as most pupils progress to further education, employment and training.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Over time, the proportion of pupils who were excluded permanently or for a fixed period had been rising. However, recent changes to the school's behaviour policies and improvements in the quality of teaching are leading to the number of exclusions declining.
- The vast majority of pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They are eager to play their part in lessons. For example, pupils regularly raise their hands to volunteer an answer, or respond quickly to teachers' instructions.
- Pupils who misbehave or who need additional pastoral support are referred to 'The Bridge' to work with staff on a one-to-one basis or in small groups. Inspection evidence highlights that pupils who miss their normal lessons, as a result of a referral, stay in touch with their learning because subject leaders set pupils meaningful learning activities to complete. Furthermore, staff in 'The Bridge' hold thoughtful, restorative conversations with pupils. This ensures that any concerns pupils may have are regularly discussed with other staff in the school if necessary.
- Between 2016 and 2018, rates of attendance and persistent absence were in line with national averages. During the same period, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND were absent more often than other pupils nationally. While rates of attendance this academic year remain similar to previous years, rates of persistent absence are reducing. However, there is still much work to do to ensure that the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent from school reduces further.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment result in pupils making progress, across a range of subjects, that is not consistently strong.
- From above-average starting points, the proportion of pupils who achieve a good pass (grade 4 or higher) in both GCSE English and mathematics over time has been just above the national average. However, in each of the last three years, less than half of the disadvantaged cohort concluded Year 11 having achieved a good pass in both subjects.
- Between 2016 and 2018, pupils' progress in English, science and humanities was significantly below that achieved by other pupils nationally. Disadvantaged pupils' progress has been particularly weak in these subjects over time. In 2018, disadvantaged pupils' progress in English was approximately one grade below other pupils nationally. In humanities, disadvantaged pupils' progress was more than one grade below that achieved by other pupils nationally.
- Some teachers' understanding of the primary school curriculum and the standard of work pupils have been working at up to Year 6 is underdeveloped. Teachers sometimes plan learning activities that lead to pupils repeating work that they have already mastered in their primary schools. For example, Year 7 pupils in mathematics spend time learning to multiply decimals (covered in Year 5 in most schools), without deepening their understanding further or applying their knowledge to a wider range of problems. Consequently, the progress of some pupils in Year 7 is not as strong as it should be.
- Pupils with high attainment on entry and the most able pupils within some classes are not always challenged as well as they could be. Leaders are working hard to improve this across the school. They are reviewing schemes of work to ensure that pupils' learning activities become increasingly difficult and require pupils to draw on their prior knowledge extensively. However, in some subjects currently, there are too few opportunities for the most able to 'let loose' and explore the boundaries as they are capable of doing. Consequently, although attainment is high for these pupils, progress varies.
- Some current disadvantaged pupils are beginning to show signs of what they are capable of. This is because, in some lessons, teachers' consistently high expectations and targeted questioning ensure that there are no excuses for pupils not to try their very best. In other lessons, teachers' expectations are not as high. In these lessons, disadvantaged pupils, and some pupils with low prior attainment, are not always asked to improve their work or seek help and advice when they need it. This has a detrimental effect on the progress that these pupils make.
- The improving quality of teaching is contributing to pupils making stronger gains in their learning this academic year. Scrutiny of key stage 4 pupils' work in English demonstrates that pupils are writing with increasing sophistication and using source materials and quotations to good effect. Across subjects such as mathematics, science and geography, pupils' graphical skills are improving. Pupils extrapolate and interpret a range of information with confidence, enabling them, in many cases, to draw valid conclusions and create accurate evaluations.

- The proportion of pupils who go on to further education, employment or training is consistently high.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is stronger than in key stages 3 and 4. This is because most teachers know their students well. Teachers' planning is effective, ensuring that the needs of most students are successfully supported. Teachers have established effective working routines and relationships with students. This ensures that students are motivated, inquisitive and demonstrate a strong understanding of examination specifications and instructions.
- Leaders in the sixth form are passionate and energetic. They demonstrate a determined and enthusiastic approach to improving the quality of education students receive. Leaders know well what they need to improve to achieve this aim.
- Recent training has improved teachers' use of assessment in the sixth form. Teachers say that they can now precisely identify and target students who are underachieving or who require intensive support to do better. Similarly, through regular dialogue with staff, leaders can check how well students are doing and whether teachers need further support or more resources to carry out their responsibilities effectively.
- Students value their time in the sixth form. Rates of attendance are consistently high. When a student's attendance begins to decline, leaders are swift to intervene. Leaders offer students appropriate support and/or reiterate their high expectations regarding regular attendance to lessons. This ensures that students do not remain absent for prolonged periods of time or fall behind in their learning.
- Students benefit from highly effective advice and guidance prior to starting Year 12. This contributes significantly to the very high rates of retention between Year 12 and 13 on both academic and applied courses.
- Strengths in careers education provision continue into the sixth form. Consequently, students are knowledgeable, because they experience a wide range of talks, visits and activities that prepare them effectively for the world of work. This is supplemented, very effectively, by an established programme of work experience. Currently, over 90% of students have completed work experience in various guises, including in the NHS, multi-national corporations and a range of law firms.
- Nearly all students progress to a range of further educational establishments and universities, employment or apprenticeships. A small proportion do so after completing a gap year. High-attaining students with aspirations to attend Oxbridge or other Russell Group universities to study medicine, law or science receive specialist advice and support from staff to ensure that they are fully prepared, ready for interviews or primed to write the best personal statement they can.
- Over time, students' progress in academic courses has been broadly average. Students with average starting points make the most progress across the sixth form. High-attaining students on entry do less well. Typically, students make consistently strong progress in photography, psychology, law, English language and geography at A level. In 2018, students' progress was below average in history, mathematics, religious studies and English literature.

- The very small number of students who did not achieve a good pass in either or both GCSE English and mathematics attend regular lessons in Year 12. The vast majority of current students have improved on the grade they achieved previously.

School details

Unique reference number	140867
Local authority	Hartlepool Borough
Inspection number	10110599

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

Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1441
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	219
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Gillian Proudlock
Headteacher	Stephen Hammond
Telephone number	01429 273 790
Website	http://www.ems.hartlepool.sch.uk
Email address	admin@ems.hartlepool.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 May 2017

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The vast majority of pupils attending the school are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and receive support from the pupil premium is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below average.
- The school is the only member of The Holy Family Education multi-academy trust. Responsibility for the school rests with the directors of the trust. Many pastoral responsibilities are delegated to the members of the local governing body.

- The current headteacher was appointed in September 2015.
- A national leader of education (NLE) from a school judged outstanding by Ofsted has been supporting senior leaders since September 2017.
- The school is supported by staff from Durham Education Development Service.
- Staff and pupils at the school are due to move into a new school building in September 2019.
- Currently, the school uses part-time and full-time alternative education provision at Ace at Dyke House, the local authority home and hospital service at the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Field House Farm in Hartlepool, Pro-active Training and the Virtual Skills Academy.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 51 lessons across the school. Many of the observations of lessons were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior and subject leaders, teachers, members of the local governing board and directors of the trust, including the chair of both.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone to an NLE who is supporting leaders in the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work during lessons and with a group of subject leaders in mathematics, English, science, history and geography. In addition, inspectors scrutinised a large sample of workbooks belonging to pupils with SEND and another belonging to disadvantaged pupils.
- An inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative of the alternative education providers used by the school.
- Inspectors held informal and formal discussions with many pupils and observed interactions during social times.
- Inspectors listened to a group of Year 7 and Year 8 pupils read.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and scrutinised a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation, analysis of performance information, action plans and evaluations, attendance and behaviour records, safeguarding files, recruitment checks and governor minutes.
- Inspectors considered the 77 responses from parents and carers who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and responses from the 71 members of staff who completed Ofsted's online staff survey. No pupils responded to the online pupil questionnaire. All these responses were taken into consideration.

Inspection team

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Geoffrey Lumsdon	Ofsted Inspector
Julian Appleyard	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Cook	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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