

Inspection of St Cuthbert's High School

Gretna Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE15 7PX

Inspection dates: 30 June to 1 July 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils do not behave as well as they should, including during social times. Pupils say that some do not show the respect they should to other pupils. For example, some pupils make inappropriate comments to others. They do not show respect for those people who are different from them.

Most pupils have high expectations of what they can achieve and want to do well. Staff and leaders share this ambition. Many pupils achieve highly. There is a range of clubs they can attend to explore their interests. However, subject leaders have not ensured that plans for pupils' learning fully consider the needs of all pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Some pupils do not feel that bullying is dealt with well. Some pupils told inspectors that they do not feel safe, including during social time. Pupils know that there are staff with whom they can speak if they have a concern. Pastoral leaders are vigilant of pupils' welfare.

The recent introduction of house points, house colours and VIPAs (very impressive pupil awards) is helping to encourage pupils to improve their behaviour and engage with their learning and the wider life of the school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Senior leaders and governors have not maintained a culture of high expectations. Over time, the school has declined, particularly in pupils' behaviour and personal development. The new headteacher knows what needs to improve. With senior leaders, he has begun to bring about this improvement, including in how staff manage pupils' behaviour.

The school offers a broad curriculum. It is ambitious in the range of subjects that pupils can study. For example, pupils study separate sciences and can study Mandarin. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. However, leaders have not ensured that all curriculum plans identify what pupils should know and when. They have not made sure that teachers routinely check what pupils have been taught. Because of this, teachers do not effectively identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and the reasons behind these gaps.

The school's work to promote pupils' wider reading has been inconsistent. Not all pupils develop the wider love of reading they should, beyond the books they read in class. Teachers have not received effective training to help them support pupils who struggle to read. Pupils who are weaker readers do not receive enough support to help them to read fluently.

Subject leaders do not consider how best they can meet the needs of pupils with SEND when planning the curriculum. Until recently, staff have received little training

in how to support these pupils well. Leaders have begun to review the needs of all pupils with SEND. They are now providing the necessary information to staff to help them support these pupils more effectively.

Leaders have not ensured that staff manage pupils' behaviour well. This has led to a decline in behaviour. The headteacher has begun to address this. He has reviewed the school's behaviour policy with staff. Senior leaders now keep accurate behaviour records. They use these records to identify the causes of pupils' poor behaviour. When they identify any patterns, leaders act to ensure that pupils know how they should behave. This is beginning to bring about an improvement in behaviour.

Not all pupils are as well prepared as they should be for life in British society. Some are not confident in their knowledge of British values. Some do not show respect for those who are different from them, including by their use of racist, sexist and homophobic language. Senior leaders now challenge any inappropriate views and comments. They do this through lessons and assemblies. For example, pupils discuss current events in form time. This allows them to hear different points of view. There are plans in place to provide a regular programme of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education next academic year, to help promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers have not been able to deliver PSHE regularly this year. This is partly due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic.

Students in the sixth form receive effective support to help them choose appropriate courses to study. They have positive attitudes towards their learning. Students achieve well. They receive appropriate support to enable them to prepare for their next steps, and for independent living. They learn about university courses, apprenticeships, interview techniques and personal financing. Students receive opportunities to develop their leadership skills. This includes taking on positions of responsibility. Most students move on successfully to their next stage of education, training or employment.

Many members of the local governing body are new, including the chair of the governing body. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors and trust leaders are beginning to provide senior leaders with more effective support and challenge to improve the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They know to pass on any concerns they may have about pupils' welfare. Safeguarding leaders respond quickly to any such concerns and provide appropriate support. They engage well with outside agencies when necessary so that pupils receive the support they need. Counselling services and social workers come into school to provide support for pupils who may be experiencing social, emotional and mental health difficulties, including as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders maintain comprehensive safeguarding records.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some curriculum plans do not identify what knowledge pupils should learn and when. It is not always clear in curriculum plans how pupils will build their knowledge over time. Leaders should ensure that all curriculum plans identify the essential knowledge and skills pupils should remember, so that pupils know and can do more.
- At times, teachers' use of assessment does not enable them to identify what knowledge pupils are missing and why. Consequently, teachers do not always identify the gaps in pupils' understanding before moving learning on or introducing new concepts. Leaders should ensure that the checks that teachers make on pupils' understanding enable them to identify what pupils do not know, so that they can provide pupils with the necessary support to become secure in their knowledge and understanding.
- Curriculum planning does not routinely take into account the needs of pupils with SEND. Information about these pupils' needs has not been available to teachers. This limits how effectively these pupils can access the curriculum and how well they can achieve. Leaders should ensure that plans for learning in each subject and the support from staff enable pupils with SEND to achieve their potential.
- The school's work to prioritise reading and support weaker readers is inconsistent. This limits how well those who struggle to read become fluent readers and how effectively pupils develop a love of reading. Leaders should ensure that their approach to promoting reading, including training for staff, helps weaker readers to read fluently and encourages all pupils to read often and widely.
- Leaders have not ensured that staff manage pupils' behaviour well. Staff do not always challenge poor behaviour. As a result, pupils do not behave as well as they should, including around the school site. Leaders should ensure that all staff manage pupils' behaviour in line with the school's new behaviour policy.
- Not all pupils have a good understanding of the importance of British values. Some make inappropriate comments that do not show respect for those who have different values, beliefs or opinions to them. Leaders should ensure that all pupils gain a deep understanding of the values of British society and of the need to show respectful attitudes towards others.
- Senior leaders' lack of oversight of all aspects of the school has led to a decline in the quality of education, behaviour and pupils' personal development. Senior leaders should ensure that their recent work to improve the school quickly leads to improvements.
- Until recently, those responsible for governance have not had an accurate understanding of the school's weaknesses. They have been unable to hold leaders fully to account as a result. Having now received an accurate view of the school from the headteacher, governors and trust leaders must ensure that they provide precise support and challenge to bring about further improvement.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	137900
Local authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	10198364
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	1203
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	195
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Harrison
Headteacher	Daniel P. Murray
Website	www.st-cuthbertshigh.newcastle.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	26 and 27 April 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust on 1 December 2020.
- The headteacher took up his substantive role as headteacher in January 2021.
- The chair of the local governing body took up his role in January 2021.
- The school makes use of one alternative education provider, Newcastle Bridges School.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and staff.
- Inspectors looked closely at the quality of education in English, mathematics, chemistry and French. This involved discussions with subject leaders, visiting lessons, scrutinising samples of pupils' work, speaking with teachers and meeting with pupils to talk to them about their learning. Inspectors also looked further at curriculum planning and assessment in technology, art, geography and history.
- Inspectors met with pupils, both formally and informally.
- Inspectors visited lessons and observed pupils' behaviour around the school site both before and after school, and during social times.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the local governing body, the trust's chief executive officer and a representative of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle.
- An inspector spoke with a representative of the alternative education provision of which the school makes use.
- Inspectors scrutinised documents and records relating to safeguarding, self-evaluation and school improvement.
- The lead inspector checked the school's single central record and recruitment procedures.

Inspection team

Simon Hollingsworth, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
James Duncan	Her Majesty's Inspector
Eleanor Belfield	Her Majesty's Inspector
Fiona Manuel	Her Majesty's Inspector
Carl Sugden	Seconded Inspector of Schools
Matthew Vellensworth	Her Majesty's Inspector

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