

## **ST HELENS LOCAL AUTHORITY REVIEW**

**NAME OF SCHOOL:** St Cuthbert's Catholic High School

**DATE OF LAST**

**MONITORING INSPECTION:** Not applicable

**DATE OF THIS REVIEW:** 18 January 2016

**FOCUS OF REVIEW:** The effectiveness of leadership and management.  
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

**ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN:** Observations of classes.  
Scrutiny of samples of students' work.  
Discussions with headteacher, senior leaders and middle leaders.  
Meeting with governors.  
Discussions with students.  
Review of documentation.  
A total of 14 lessons were observed in a variety of subjects across all year groups and within different ability levels.  
Observations were done jointly with senior leaders and no inadequate lessons were observed.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The school's self-evaluation against Ofsted criteria currently grades overall effectiveness as good. The head of school and executive headteacher have an accurate view of the school and the priority areas for action necessary to improve student outcomes. Their high ambition and clear visions are shared by other senior leaders and staff. Everyone talks of aspirations and systems that are being developed to rigorously monitor achievement and set challenging targets. Behaviour expectations are high and evidence was seen in classrooms, confirmed by students themselves.

The curriculum has breadth and balance and a wide range of experiences and opportunities are presented to support learning and extend skills. Tolerance and other British values are promoted across the school. Senior and middle leaders have clear systems in place for monitoring and evaluation, and plans have been actioned to improve teaching and learning in all departments, with some more advanced than others.

Staff are monitored, respected and increasingly effective. There is good leadership capacity and actions have been taken to strengthen leadership and improve performance. There are systems in place to monitor the progress of all groups of students throughout the school.

There is good engagement with parents, and a current parental questionnaire with feedback was noted which confirmed strong support from parents. The governors are very supportive of the school and do hold leaders to account.

They have a clear knowledge of what is going on and there are processes in place for all to follow. Governors have more recently been assigned to departments to monitor closely progress within those areas and it is clear that their support and challenge to the school is having a strong impact.

### **The quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Classroom environments are bright and support learning, with display a key feature. Assessment systems are developing well and used to inform learning organisation. Some departments are more developed than others and high expectations of leaders are generally translated into classroom activities, but not always. In some cases, assessment for learning could be used to a greater effect to set challenging learning activities, but senior leaders are aware of what they need to do for greater consistency. Books are marked regularly, although sometimes more information could be given to students to help them improve their subsequent work.

Homework is set regularly with parents/carers informed about progress. Indeed students themselves commented on the improvements that had been made in marking and the setting of homework. Senior and middle leaders have a good understanding of where the school is in relation to the management of teaching and learning, and new systems and procedures are clearly having a positive impact.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Although this was not a key focus of the visit, it is still appropriate to report on findings.

Students are certainly proud of their school. Confidence is variable but this is understandable. Behaviour is good, confirmed by students themselves, and there are strong systems in place to monitor behaviour, attendance and welfare overall. Attendance is improving and is now close to the national average. No aspects of poor behaviour were observed in lessons and around the school generally. Students commented on how helpful careers guidance is, and there is an increasing emphasis on student involvement in the school decision making process. Sometimes students need more opportunities to develop their oracy skills for discussion and debate but they are given opportunities for extra curricular work, and there was evidence of a number of extra classes for examination work.

### **Summary**

There is no doubt that St Cuthberts is an improving school. Senior leaders are very clear about what they want for the school and a number of initiatives and strategies have been put in place to ensure that progress is being made. Changes made over the past twelve months have had a positive impact and there is a strong drive to succeed in all aspects of the school's development. This can only benefit the students and provide a good education for them. There are strong partnerships in place and the school can look forward to the future with confidence.

## **Recommendations**

In order to improve still further, school leaders should continue with the current approach that they have adopted. Examples of best practice can be used more widely across the school and the monitoring procedures that have been introduced should be developed to ensure rigour, challenge and support across all departments. Expectations must remain high and students should only benefit further in the future.