

# St Helens Local Authority School Review

<b>Name of school</b>	<b>St Cuthbert' Catholic High School</b>
<b>Date of last S5 Ofsted inspection</b>	<b>September 2016</b> <b>Overall effectiveness judged to be good</b>
<b>Date of this review</b>	<b>22<sup>nd</sup> January 2019</b>

## **Contextual information.**

In autumn 2018 the St Helens School Effectiveness Team identified this school as being in need of support and challenge from the Local Authority. As a result the school was placed in 'Band B' and this means it is involved in periodic Achievement and Improvement Board (AIB) meetings and school reviews. These are designed to assist in bringing about the necessary improvements to pupil outcomes.

Reviews usually take place on a termly basis and each one is tailored to the needs of the individual school. During the visit the team evaluates the current stage of development of the school, identifies progress that has been made in relation to priorities and any previous action points and provides recommendations to promote further improvement. Review reports are aligned with Ofsted inspection criteria and provide Headteachers and governors with an objective evaluation of the school.

This is the first review of the school since it was last inspected by Ofsted in September 2016.

## **Outcomes in summer 2018.**

Outcomes in summer 2018 were discussed in the autumn term AIB meeting when representatives from the school presented an analysis of results. Leaders acknowledged that insufficient challenge and low expectations in the past have meant that many pupils have not made sufficient progress by the end of Year 11 and, as a result, outcomes have been too low.

Provisional results for summer 2018 show that the school had an attainment 8 score of 39.9, which is lower than the local and national averages. The progress 8 score of -0.65, is well below average. Disadvantaged pupils had a progress 8 score of -0.9, and there is a difference in the progress of girls and boys in favour of girls. Pupils with high prior attainment compared favourably to middle and low prior attainers with -0.4 compared with -0.76 and -0.7 respectively.

40% of pupils entered Ebacc and this is higher than the national average. The average Ebacc score was 3.60 compared to the national average of 3.83. 32% of pupils gained grade 5 or above in English and mathematics.

Though the school acknowledged that the standards and progress were low for all groups of pupils, they also presented information and data taking account of some specific case studies with associated exceptional circumstances relating to a group of 9 pupils who failed to attend their GCSE examinations. This had a significant impact on the headline figures for the school.

Whilst leaders have been committed to taking action in order to improve standards for some time, the analysis of the results in summer 2018, has informed further action in respect of curriculum changes and additional targeted action to secure improvements in attainment and progress for all

# St Helens Local Authority School Review

---

groups of pupils across the school.

A recent analysis of pupil progress along with evidence from the monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment indicates that the current year 11 are showing a much improved picture. Leaders are monitoring evidence from teachers with great care in order to validate predictions.

<b>The focus of this review</b>	The effectiveness of leadership and management. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Personal development, behaviour and welfare.
<b>Activities undertaken to gain evidence</b>	Discussions with the Headteacher. Discussions with senior leaders and middle leaders. Discussion with a group of governors. Observations of pupils' learning in a sample of lessons. Scrutiny of pupils' work in books. Discussions with pupils – year 11 pupils, year 8 boys, pupils supported by pupil premium funding. Review the school's self-evaluation. Observation of an assembly. Observations of behaviour during informal times of the school day.

## Findings of the review

### 1. The effectiveness of leadership and management.

On arrival at this school a visitor immediately gains a sense of the vision and high levels of ambition held by members of the school community. Displays highlight the focus on improving learning, developing personal qualities and ambition and maximising the opportunities for all pupils to succeed.

The Headteacher provides dynamic and determined leadership with a clear sense of direction and commitment. Working with other leaders, staff, governors and pupils she has created a highly positive and inclusive school culture, which is communicated very clearly by all leaders, governors and pupils, and evident in the daily life of the school. Relationships between adults and pupils, and between pupils across all year groups are exemplary; respectful, tolerant and caring.

Interviews with year 11 pupils showed that they understand the key part that they play as positive role models for younger pupils. They articulated how proud they are of their school and said that they know it has high standing in the local community and beyond. A group of these pupils were seen to confidently lead a year 8 assembly, when they successfully engaged the enthusiastic younger pupils in active participation in a quiz on world religions. This worked very successfully without any adult involvement. This example typifies the trust that exists between adults and pupils based on a shared understanding of expectations.

Leaders recognise that historical outcomes have been too low and are determined to improve. All

# St Helens Local Authority School Review

---

developments and interventions are monitored and evaluated carefully to ensure that they make a positive impact on pupils. Leaders reflect on their actions and challenge each other, showing flexibility when there is a need to adjust actions. The school is building a strong evidence base that shows the difference made to specific groups of pupils, and this ensures that their self-evaluation is rigorous and based on secure information. The current self-evaluation document presents a succinct and honest picture of the current position in the school, but is too modest and should provide more evidence of the positive impact made by the school.

The governing body provides a good level of challenge and support, and members have a wide range of skills and experience to offer. It has gained external accreditation by gaining the Governor Mark and members have designated link areas on which they report. There is scope to develop the monitoring role of governors a little more by gaining feedback from pupils.

Staff professional development is central to the school's drive for improvement and this takes a variety of forms. The school engages very well with other local schools and partners, but also seeks out excellent practice and support from a range of sources. Increasingly, under the direction of a newly appointed leader, staff are working collaboratively to share practice, including undertaking peer observations, in order to learn from each other. This work, along with targeted SLT support, is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, which is improving across the school.

Leaders recognise the importance of ensuring that the curriculum offer meets the needs of pupils and maximises their options for the future. Some adjustments to the range of courses offered have taken place recently and the review is ongoing. Careful consideration is given to communicating with parents and pupils regarding any planned changes. Key Stage 3 remains focused on years 7 and 8, but the Headteacher is mindful of the need to keep this under consideration.

Equality of opportunity and diversity are promoted through expectations, teaching and learning and through the wider opportunities provided by pupils. The school is committed to ensuring that all pupils valued as individuals and that their social and health needs are met alongside their academic needs. Pupils are clear that staff do not tolerate any prejudiced behaviour and that they are encouraged to explore a wide range of issues that are relevant to their lives.

Safeguarding practice in this school was identified as an area of strength in the last Ofsted inspection and it remains effective. The school's approach seeks to maximise prevention and early intervention as well as providing robust support for the most vulnerable pupils. All of the pupils interviewed stated that they feel absolutely safe at school and know that staff will support them if they have problems.

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

The review team undertook a total of 24 short periods of observation that covered a wide range of subjects, age groups and ability levels. A visit was also made to the behaviour support provision. The observations were undertaken jointly with school leaders and evaluations showed a high degree of consistency. The overall judgement for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school made by leaders is that it is mainly strong and continuing to improve. This reflects the picture seen in the sample of learning that was observed by the review team.

The use of well-developed codes of classroom behaviour across the school means that pupils settle quickly to their learning and focus well throughout lessons. Relationships are positive across the school and there was no evidence of low-level disruption, even when the teaching was not

# St Helens Local Authority School Review

---

sufficiently challenging. This is highly indicative of the positive effect of the behaviour systems in the school.

The pupils have access to a good quality-learning environment and some areas of the school demonstrate interesting displays of pupils' work. It would be beneficial to develop the use of classroom display areas in order to provide useful examples of pupils' work and subject based information, both of which would help pupils to develop their own work.

Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and use this effectively to provide clear explanations and to respond to pupils' questions. In the best lessons, excellent subject knowledge also helped to embed learning and deepen understanding. Most teachers use questioning effectively to test pupils' knowledge and understanding, but there is more scope to use informal assessment for learning to adapt tasks and differentiate activity during lessons to maximise the learning of different groups of pupils. Teaching assistants were seen to make a valuable contribution to lessons, providing useful individualised support for pupils with SEND and wider support where appropriate.

Pupils are confident learners who are not afraid of making mistakes and are willing to answer questions. Whilst some lessons provide opportunities for pupils to engage as active partners in their learning, there is a tendency for teachers to direct teaching to the whole class working individually, and this restricts the development of pupils' skills in discussion and debate. Where teachers used group work and interactive activities, they were seen to enhance learning, engagement and enjoyment.

The school has a marking and feedback policy that is well understood by pupils, who say that it helps them to improve their work. There were some apparent inconsistencies in the application of the system, although most work had been marked regularly and there was considerable evidence of pupils' responding to marking. Monitoring systems should be used to ensure that the system is used consistently. Pupils receive feedback on their progress towards target grades, but they do not always recall what these are and what they need to do to achieve them.

Following the last Ofsted inspection, the school has developed a more structured approach to developing English across the curriculum. Whilst leaders explained in detail the approach taken, it was not clearly evident when visiting classrooms and it is suggested that key messages should be reinforced in lessons with more opportunities provided for pupils to undertake speaking and listening activities across the curriculum.

### **3. Personal development, behaviour and welfare (PDBW).**

Pupils look smart in their uniform and show great pride in their school. They know that they are part of a community and that how they behave reflects on the standing of their school. Year 11 pupils see that the school has gained a positive image and are confident that this is underpinned by the improvements in standards, including behaviour that have taken place in recent years.

Pupils were seen to behave well at all times of the school day, managing their own behaviour without reminders of expectations from adults. As a result, the school was calm and orderly, despite the fact that the weather conditions on the day were challenging at lunch and break times. As indicated already there is scope to develop pupil participation in lessons further in order to help them to develop and use a range of interpersonal skills.

The school has used strong data systems to evaluate the effectiveness of behaviour, attendance and welfare systems over time and has continued to develop and adjust policies in order to maximise

## St Helens Local Authority School Review

---

their impact. Systems are well developed and effective in most instances. They are illustrated effectively through the use of case studies, which demonstrate the extensive and effective action taken by the school to help individuals and their families.

Evidence shows that the school is now able to focus on developing and implementing preventive and early intervention systems so as to further increase expectations and reduce the need for sanctions to be applied. An example of this is the new appointment made of a leader for personal development, which will bring together several strands of provision across the school under a more strategic umbrella.

The school has high quality and impartial careers guidance in place that helps pupils to make informed choices about their next steps in education. The quality of provision has recently been formally recognised through gaining the Quality in Careers Standard, making the school the first in England to achieve this status.

Overall attendance rates for the school currently average at 94.7%, which is slightly higher than the national average. Persistent absence rates are below the national average at 12%. The school's analysis shows that the attendance of pupils supported by pupils premium and those with SEND remain a priority for improvement, and targeted action continues to address the underlying barriers that face individual pupils. This is an important drive that contributes to securing improvements in outcomes for these pupils.

Pupils said that bullying is rare and that staff take effective action if any problems occur. They said that incidents of poor behaviour are very rare in the school now, both in lessons and at informal times of the day. All the pupils interviewed feel safe at school and well supported by adults. They recognise that leaders are concerned for their emotional health and well-being as well as their academic success.

Pupils are provided with many opportunities to participate in activities that enhance their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These include experience of leadership and supporting other pupils.

### **Summary**

There is much effective practice in this school.

The vision and ambition radiating from the Headteacher ensures everyone associated with the school is committed to improvement. Leadership at all levels is continuing to become stronger and this is having a positive impact on the speed of developments in key aspects of provision.

Leaders are determined to improve outcomes, and there is evidence that the combination of high quality pupil support systems and improvements that are taking place in the quality of teaching is now having a positive impact on pupils' progress.

# St Helens Local Authority School Review

---

## Recommendations

These are intended to help leaders to further improve overall effectiveness of the school.

1. Ensure that the school's self-evaluation fully reflects the positive impact of the provision made by the school.
2. Continue to develop the work of the governing body by involving members in gaining the views of pupils on different areas of school life.
3. Continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment with particular reference to:
  - providing differentiated opportunities for pupils so that learning is maximised;
  - ensuring that teaching provides a range of learning opportunities for pupils, such as opportunities to plan and deliver group work, and undertaking research activities;
  - ensuring that the marking and feedback policy is used consistently and that pupils know their targets and what they need to do to achieve them;
  - ensuring that developments to improve the use of English across the curriculum are clearly evident.
4. Further develop the classroom environment in order to enhance learning.
5. Continue the drive to improve the attendance of disadvantage pupils and those with SEND.

***The school should incorporate these recommendations into existing improvement plans, showing clearly how they will be addressed.***