

Inspection of English Martyrs Catholic School and Sixth Form College

Catcote Road, Hartlepool TS25 4HA

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

English Martyrs Catholic School and Sixth Form College is undergoing a period of change. Leaders from the trust have made significant changes to leadership, particularly pastoral leadership, to ensure that school improvement continues to move forward. Many new systems are in the process of being embedded. A new behaviour policy has recently been introduced.

Despite this, there is still evidence that some pupils' behaviour is, at times, not good enough. Some pupils and staff talk about lessons sometimes being disrupted by poor behaviour. Not all staff challenge this behaviour consistently. Some pupils feel that this is unfair.

Pupils have mixed views on bullying. Some pupils feel that bullying is not a problem. They say that the school teaches them that bullying is not acceptable. They also agree that school will take initial action around bullying. However, some pupils feel that the action taken is not effective. Despite some pupils talking confidently about equality, other pupils say that discriminatory language is used. Leaders are taking action to educate pupils further around tolerance and equality.

Currently, the quality of education and the standards that pupils achieve are not good enough. Leaders are raising expectations for what pupils should achieve. Sixth-form students benefit from a strongly academic focus. They value the personalised support they receive from being in a small sixth form.

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

Leaders have prioritised creating a broad and ambitious curriculum for pupils. The number of pupils who study the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) suite of subjects at key stage 4 is high. The majority of pupils in Years 8 and 9 study two languages. The school offers the choice of three languages from Year 10. EBacc is at the heart of the school's curriculum. The range of subject options available to those in sixth form is impressive. It includes government and politics, law and sociology A levels.

Leaders have thought carefully about what they want pupils to learn in different subjects. This content is mapped out logically so that pupils can build knowledge over time. However, there is still too much variation in how effectively this curriculum is delivered across the school. Some teachers do not check carefully what all pupils know, and so do not identify gaps in learning. Some teachers use questioning effectively to check understanding. However, some teachers move on with lessons before pupils are secure in their learning. This means that some pupils struggle to explain what they know. Teaching is much more secure in sixth form, where small class sizes mean that teachers check precisely what all pupils understand.

Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is strong. Pupils with SEND are supported effectively to achieve alongside their peers.

Leaders have created an inclusive environment for these pupils. Pupils with SEND and parents talk positively about the support staff provide. Recently appointed leaders are introducing further strategies to boost the progress of disadvantaged pupils, who achieve significantly less well than their peers. Leaders are in the early stages of being able to assess the impact of their changes.

Leaders have ensured that support is in place for pupils who find reading more difficult. Leaders check the impact of this support. Newly appointed staff have begun to prioritise reading across the curriculum and reading for pleasure. The library is a busy, much-valued space. However, many of the plans to encourage pupils to read widely are in their infancy. Younger pupils talk positively about reading routines. This same attitude is not shared by older pupils.

Pupils learn about issues that will prepare them to be positive citizens in virtues lessons. Leaders have recently devoted more curriculum time to virtues lessons, where pupils learn about personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Pupils learn about diversity and tolerance. Younger pupils talk clearly about respecting other people and equality. Year 7 pupils have taken part in an art project focused on diversity. Pupils are taught about healthy relationships and consent. Leaders make sure that pupils have chances to debate important issues in their curriculum subjects. Students in the sixth form value the advice and guidance they receive about their future plans. They receive effective support from staff to ensure they make the right choices.

Leaders have made changes to the school day by lengthening lunchtime to make sure that all pupils can access extra-curricular clubs. Younger pupils talked with enthusiasm about the range of opportunities they enjoy. The school promotes the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. These activities are especially well attended. During the inspection, a large number of Years 7 and 8 pupils were attending a retreat.

Leaders have an accurate view of their future priorities for the school. As a consequence of changes, some staff feel that workload is an issue. Other staff feel that their workload is considered by leaders. The majority of staff are proud to work at this school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in school. Leaders have ensured that all staff are clear about what signs they should look out for and report. Staff are confident in how to use child protection systems in school. There is a strong communication system which enables leaders to have a clear overview of pupils' welfare.

Detailed records show that leaders are tenacious when working with external agencies. They challenge decisions when necessary. Leaders make sure that pupils and their families get the support they need.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. Leaders make sure that the information pupils receive is well matched to any risks that they might face.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is too much variability in how well teachers deliver the curriculum. Some teachers do not check systematically what pupils know and understand in lessons. This means that sometimes lessons move on before pupils have learned the curriculum securely. Leaders should ensure that the delivery of the curriculum is of a consistently high quality.
- Some staff do not consistently challenge poor behaviour. Staff do not all have the same high expectations of pupils' behaviour. This can lead to perceptions of unfairness from pupils. It also means expectations of behaviour are not reinforced consistently. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the same expectations of pupils' behaviour and apply the behaviour policy consistently.
- Leaders have introduced many new systems and policies. These are still embedding in the school. This means that leaders have not had the opportunity to evaluate the impact of many of the systems. Leaders should ensure that they have robust systems in place to monitor the impact of the changes they have made.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

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	140867
Local authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	10244639
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,470
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	133
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Yvonne Coates
Headteacher	Sara Crawshaw
Website	https://ems.bhcet.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	23 September 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses five alternative providers. One of these is an unregistered provider.
- The school was judged to be good at its most recent inspection of denominational education and the content of the school's collective worship under section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in January 2018. Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in September 2021. The next section 48 inspection will be within eight years of the previous section 48 inspection.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other members of the school leadership team, including leaders in charge of literacy, numeracy, disadvantaged pupils, sixth form and careers provision.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, modern foreign languages, geography, information technology and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects on offer at key stage 5.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator. They spoke to pupils with SEND and looked at how these pupils were supported in lessons. Inspectors looked at documentation that staff use to help them meet these pupils' needs.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for safeguarding. Inspectors checked logs of actions leaders take to keep pupils safe. An inspector checked the single central record and looked at documents related to safer recruitment.
- Inspectors spoke to a wide range of staff and pupils, formally and informally, during the inspection. They checked their understanding of safeguarding procedures in school.
- Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils in lessons and at social times. They spoke to pupils about behaviour in school.
- An inspector visited an unregistered alternative provider that is used by the school. They also visited the internal isolation provision within the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of data about behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for PSHE education. They checked the curriculum for what pupils learn in virtues lessons.
- An inspector met with representatives from the local governing body, including the chair. They also met with a representative from the diocese and directors from the trust, including the chair. They also met with the chief executive officer of the trust.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, the school improvement partner report and minutes of local governing body meetings.
- Inspectors considered the online responses to Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys, and to Ofsted's parent survey, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Katie Spurr, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jessica McKay

His Majesty's Inspector

Moira Banks

Ofsted Inspector

Shelley Heseltine

Ofsted Inspector

Barry Reed

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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