

Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School and Language College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103744
Local Authority	Coventry
Inspection number	355448
Inspection dates	24–25 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Judith Matharu HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1387
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	246
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pat Garner
Headteacher	Helen Knight
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2008
School address	Potters Green Road Coventry CV2 2AJ
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 50 lessons from different teachers, including four joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. Meetings were held with a range of staff, groups of students and three members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at school documentation including information about students' progress, improvement plans, school policies, teaching records, health and safety information and an analysis of 86 parental questionnaires, together with 144 questionnaires from Year 8 and 10 students and 56 from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The progress being made by all groups of students, particularly in mathematics.
- The quality of teaching across the school and whether this is suitably challenging for students of all abilities.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- The effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels in driving whole school improvement.

Information about the school

Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School and Language College is a large, voluntary aided comprehensive serving a diverse community in Coventry. The school receives students from over 20 primary schools and has a diverse population in terms of students' ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Just over 80% of students are from White British or other White backgrounds, including an increasing number from Polish backgrounds, with around 20% from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. The school's sixth form has increased in recent years; the school works in a consortium partnership with several other schools for post-16 provision. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs and/or disabilities is just below the national average, as is the proportion with special educational needs, learning difficulties or disabilities.

The school achieved specialist languages status with a rural dimension in 2005. It holds an International Schools Award, Healthy Schools Award, Eco School Silver Award, 'Read Me' Award, Investors in Careers, Investors in People, and a Teaching Award for Sustainable Schools.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**2****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****2**

Main findings

This is a good and rapidly improving school. Purposeful leadership at all levels has ensured that well-planned strategies for improvement have made a positive impact on provision and in turn on outcomes for students since the last inspection. Improvements in teaching and in the range and quality of the curriculum are engaging students more effectively; consequently, behaviour, attitudes to learning and the progress students make are good. Attainment for all groups of students has continued to improve, rising to well above the national average 2010.

The well-planned curriculum and outstanding quality of the care, guidance and support ensure that the needs of all students are extremely well met. Students enjoy learning, say they feel safe in school and respond positively to their teachers.

A key factor in the school's improvement is the close attention paid to tracking students' progress. The headteacher has ensured that rigorous monitoring of students' performance data is embedded as routine practice. The information gathered is used very well to drill down and focus on individual students, closely monitor their progress and inform where interventions are necessary.

Despite the significant improvements that have been made, some areas of inconsistency remain. There are some variations in attainment and progress across the curriculum. For example, performance in mathematics is not as good as for other subjects. There is some inconsistency too, in the achievements of more able students who do not always achieve the higher grades that might reasonably be expected. Further, although teaching is good overall, there remain some inconsistencies in the use of assessment information to plan teaching and the extent to which learning activities are consistently matched to students' ability, particularly for the more-able.

The school has good capacity to sustain current levels of performance and improve further. This arises from:

- the good track record of improvements that school leaders have achieved, including tackling those areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report
- accurate self-evaluation at whole-school and departmental levels
- a committed staff who are well motivated, understand what the school is trying to achieve and involved in striving to attain these goals.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progression rates in mathematics so that this matches the progress made by all groups of students in the other core subjects.

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- Increase the proportion of teaching and learning that is outstanding by:
 - using performance data routinely to inform practice in classrooms
 - ensuring that the level of challenge provided through learning activities is varied and appropriate for the range of abilities in the class
 - in particular, ensuring that the needs of more able students are better met in order to achieve the highest grades at GCSE and in sixth form courses.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

In 2009, attainment at Key Stage 4 improved to above national averages for most indicators. It improved significantly in 2010 to well above the national averages. The attainment of key groups is high and on a rising trend. Boys' attainment has shown significant improvement with a smaller than average gap between boys and girls. The attainment of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also above average. Attainment in English and mathematics for all groups has steadily improved.

Students join the school with broadly average attainment. The rate of progress they make over time has been improving sharply over the last three years and is now good. The significant improvement in attainment in 2010 and the projections for 2011, based on interim module and test results, support this. The progress of individual groups of students, including those from minority ethnic groups and for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similarly good. Students' attitudes to learning and their ability to apply themselves in lessons are good. This is reflected in the good progress they made in lessons observed during the inspection. Students were lively, prepared to contribute well to discussions and able to take responsibility for their own learning with confidence. However, progress in mathematics remains inconsistent and is not as good as for other subjects. Further, the progress of more able students is inconsistent across subjects. The school is aware of this and is working hard to accelerate progress in these respects.

Attendance has steadily improved over the past three years and is now broadly average. Other outcomes for students are good. Relationships in school are supportive and encourage consistently good behaviour; consequently, the number of exclusions has reduced. There are few bullying incidents; students are confident that there is always a member of staff to talk to should the need arise.

Students are proud of their school and take pleasure in participating in a variety of activities. They are effective members of their community and many are involved further afield, for example, via enterprise activities, various charitable events and working in local primary schools.

Students demonstrate good awareness of the value of diverse cultures and of moral and social issues as a result of their involvement in a number of charity fundraising and volunteering activities. For example, members of the sixth form visit Malawi to work and teach there, and return to their own school with the responsibility to disseminate the learning they have gained from this experience. The faith dimension of the school adds much to the caring ethos and atmosphere evident in the school and contributes strongly to students' well-developed spiritual awareness. Overall, students demonstrate good work-related skills and are well equipped for the world beyond school.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good across the school.

In the majority of lessons, teachers demonstrate expert knowledge, engaging students successfully in their learning through well-chosen activities. Interesting starter activities are used effectively to fire students' interest and hook them successfully into learning. Most lessons are well-planned and incorporate a variety of suitable activities. Many teachers routinely use technology well to support their teaching. Students are provided with good feedback on their work including regular, useful marking.

In an outstanding drama lesson during inspection, many of the strengths evident in teaching across the school were apparent. The teacher provided clear and precise explanations and students were in no doubt as to her high expectations. Relationships were excellent with appropriate levels of challenge and support provided. A purposeful discussion ensued with teacher and students working as a team. Students were given choices of how they might proceed, ensuring their commitment to the task ahead. Targets were set for the session, ensuring that students were clear about what they must achieve in producing a quality DVD for the lower school as part of an anti-bullying campaign. The teacher checked students' understanding to assess their progress as the lesson developed. A variety of dramatic devices were explored which students self-assessed so that they could improve their own work. In all, the rate of progress and quality of the learning were

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outstanding. Occasionally, when learning is less effective, learning tasks are not varied or matched well enough to the range of abilities of students. This results in a slowing of progress for some students and does not encourage those who are quick learners to move on swiftly enough.

The curriculum is successful in providing a variety of good learning opportunities for all students. It has been developed well in collaboration with a range of external partners to meet students' differing needs and aspirations. Vocational options, including applied subjects, are developing well at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form with a variety of pathways made accessible for students. Specialist languages status significantly enhances the curriculum offer, the subsequent impact being that a much larger number than average achieve well in languages. In addition, a number of students are highly motivated by rural studies or animal care courses arising from the school's rural dimension.

The quality of support, care and guidance for students is outstanding. Transition arrangements are comprehensive; exemplary care is taken of vulnerable students in order to minimise the barriers to their learning. The work of a range of external agencies is very well coordinated with effective interventions made to support individual students at risk of underachievement or disaffection.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The improvements evident since the last inspection arise from strong and determined leadership at all levels. The headteacher provides excellent leadership in driving school improvement; there has been a sharp focus on improving teaching and learning together with the rigorous use of assessment data to track students' achievements. This has had a powerful impact in closing the gaps in the performance of different groups, particularly those who are most vulnerable. Most teachers are getting to grips with the use of assessment data to target interventions, although there is still opportunity for all teachers to more confidently and routinely use this information to plan their teaching.

The monitoring and evaluation of teaching is robust, leading to secure judgements about this across the school. A variety of useful activities have improved teaching to a consistently good level, as endorsed at inspection. These include regular 'health checks' of departments where an extensive range of evidence is considered, including book scrutinies and interviews with students. Professional development activities are carefully planned; teachers work well together in 'learning trios' and participate in targeted training sessions entitled 'moving from satisfactory to good' and 'from good to outstanding'. An annual residential conference aims to provide practical strategies that teachers can immediately

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implement in their teaching. There has been considerable impact of these strategies on the quality of teaching.

Leadership is distributed well and middle leaders are mostly energised by their responsibilities, demonstrating good understanding of their leadership roles and responsibilities for driving improvement at a department level. Consequently, there is a shared sense of purpose evident across the wider staff team; staff members are motivated and highly positive about the school's improvement drive and notably supportive of the leadership team's vision for the school.

Relationships with parents and carers are positive; the school makes considerable efforts to maintain good communications with parents and carers, including those who are difficult to reach. The school knows its community well. A cohesive school community has been established and work undertaken with a variety of partners beyond the school, including Church groups, other schools and businesses, both locally and further afield helps students to understand their roles as citizens and their contributions to community cohesion.

The governing body discharges its statutory role and responsibilities well. Governors articulate the vision for the school with confidence, are well-informed about its strengths and areas for improvement and are increasingly involved in evaluating its effectiveness. Close attention is given to supporting students' well-being. Safeguarding procedures are good with detailed record-keeping and robust, carefully monitored policies and procedures in place to keep students safe.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Sixth form

This large sixth form is improving rapidly due to good leadership and improved provision. Although outcomes are broadly satisfactory overall, they are improving rapidly. Progress is currently in line with expectations with consistently good progress evident for Applied AS subjects. Entry to the sixth form is inclusive, with the range and breadth of courses provided in collaboration with the local federation expanding to meet students' needs more appropriately. This is raising students' aspirations and encouraging an increasing number to remain in education. Attention has been paid to monitoring the quality of teaching closely, applying similar scrutiny as in the rest of the school. Teaching is now consistently good with impact beginning to emerge on improving attainment. Excellent care and guidance is provided to support students to remain on track, with rigorous systems in place to monitor progress and suitable interventions made at key points if students appear vulnerable. Students are well involved in the life of the school and take positions of responsibility with confidence. They are highly positive about their sixth form experiences, recognising that they are both supported and challenged. The leadership and management of the sixth form is good; there is a clear purpose and drive evident to improve attainment and progress to consistently good levels.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Given the size of the school, a relatively small number of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire at inspection. Of those that did, the majority were highly positive about the school's work. Several wrote to inspectors expressing their satisfaction, praising the school's support for their children, the improvements evident and their pleasure at their child's enjoyment of school. A number of parents and carers indicated concerns about aspects of behaviour. The inspection team maintained a focus on behaviour throughout the inspection and considered evidence about the school's responses when behaviour is unacceptable. Inspectors found students' behaviour to be consistently good in lessons and around the school; students themselves were highly positive about the promptness and robustness of the school's response when misbehaviour occurs.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School and Language College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 86 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1387 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	41	48	43	50	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	36	42	47	55	3	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	47	55	39	45	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	41	48	56	3	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	28	33	52	60	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	29	56	65	4	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	21	60	70	7	8	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	29	34	53	62	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	30	53	62	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	31	43	50	11	13	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	27	53	62	5	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	34	46	53	6	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	35	41	47	55	3	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



29 November 2010

Dear students

**Inspection of Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School and Language College,
Coventry, CV2 2AJ**

On behalf of the inspection team, thank you for your warm welcome when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed talking with many of you, listening to your views and observing your work.

We are pleased to report that we found your school provides you with a good standard of education. Results at GCSE are consistently improving to above national averages and the progress many of you are making in your learning has improved. You told us that you enjoy good relationships with your teachers and we noted this at inspection. You behave well and many of you make strong contributions to the positive atmosphere evident in school. Teaching across the school has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now consistently good. The curriculum is also good; we recognise that the opportunities available to you for different pathways at fourteen continue to expand. The school's specialism is having a positive impact on your learning as well as broadening your horizons. One of the strengths of your school is the outstanding care and guidance provided. The staff team support you very well to help you to attend, achieve, feel secure in school and able to give your best.

Your school is very well led by your headteacher and there is real determination evident across the whole staff and governor team to continuously improve Cardinal Wiseman. Even good schools can improve and so we have asked your school to continue to drive improvement in mathematics, where results are not as high as they might be, in order to ensure that you all make the best possible progress. We have also asked teachers to provide varied and different tasks in lessons so that those of you who find your work relatively easy can move on quickly.

You can support this by ensuring that you attend regularly, give your best and listen to the advice offered by your teachers.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Judith Matharu

Her Majesty's Inspector

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