

Cardinal Griffin Catholic High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124468
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	380905
Inspection dates	3–4 October 2011
Reporting inspector	David Driscoll

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	985
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	131
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janet Mellor
Headteacher	Michael Burrowes
Date of previous school inspection	22 January 2009
School address	Cardinal Way Stafford Road Cannock WS11 4AW
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors, who observed 45 lessons taught by 41 teachers. They held meetings with groups of students, staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at records of students' attainment and progress; the school's development plans; records of checks on teaching; and documents relating to the safeguarding of pupils. They also analysed responses to questionnaires completed by staff, students and 378 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well does teaching meet the needs of lower and middle ability pupils in English and mathematics?
- Are analyses of performance data and checks on lessons providing a sufficiently robust and accurate picture of teaching in all year groups so that differences between provision and outcomes can be reconciled?
- Is the emphasis on general studies in the sixth form preventing students from making better progress in the other subjects they study?

Information about the school

This specialist school for the sciences is of similar size to most other secondary schools. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is low, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is average. Most students come from a White British background. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. A new head of sixth form was appointed in June 2010.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory education for its students. They usually join Year 7 with above average levels of attainment and make steady progress in their subjects, including the sciences, as they move up the school as a result of the satisfactory teaching they receive. Students leave Year 11 with above average attainment and well equipped for the next stage of their education. Teaching is not better than satisfactory because tasks are not always matched well enough to students' abilities. This slows the pace of learning and students are not consistently told how to improve their work. Almost all groups of pupils make satisfactory progress, but the relatively small number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities at the school action stage underachieve.

The school's strengths lie in its good provision for students' personal development, both through the curriculum and the quality of care, guidance and support it provides. As a result, all aspects of students' personal development are at least good. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the part they play in the community are outstanding. Students respond exceptionally well to the opportunities provided to widen their education and understanding of the world around them. They also go further by initiating projects themselves, such as through extensive fund raising activities. Robust and successful actions have been taken to improve both attendance and behaviour. Attendance is now high and the number of exclusions much lower than in most other schools. The school is regarded well in the local community.

The school's academic performance fell after it was last inspected. Since then there has been a steady rise in achievement, reflecting the school's satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement. The school's leaders have responded well to the subject inspections of design and technology and mathematics in early 2011, although improvements in the latter remain fragile. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate, but the systems for monitoring teaching are not sufficiently robust to accelerate the drive for improvement. However, attainment and achievement are rising rapidly in the sixth form where good leadership and management have made significant changes to provision in order to address the causes of past underachievement.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching across the school, but especially in mathematics, by:
 - ensuring tasks are more accurately matched to the abilities of individual pupils
 - maximising the use of available time for learning in lessons
 - marking students' work in a way that tells them how to improve.

- Improve the progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities at the school action stage by:
 - tracking and analysing their progress more carefully
 - using the results of the analyses to inform teachers of where the progress of such students needs to be accelerated, so they can plan work which is more closely matched to their needs.

- Increase the rate of improvement in the school's academic performance by:
 - introducing a formal system for detailed recording of checks on teaching
 - cross referencing the results of checks on teaching with records of shorter term assessments of students' progress
 - consistently providing teachers with written guidance on how to improve their lessons
 - using these identified areas for improvement to monitor subsequent performance and inform development planning in subjects across the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students much enjoy coming to school where they achieve satisfactorily. Pupils who left Year 11 in 2011 joined the school with above average levels of attainment, although pupils in Year 7 last year started with attainment that was closer to average. Examination results have been rising steadily, and were above average in 2011. Lower and middle ability student make satisfactory progress in English and mathematics, although this varies from lesson to lesson according to how well tasks are matched to their needs. Progress in science is satisfactory for most students, and good for those studying three separate sciences. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities at the school action stage do not receive such well-organised support as their peers. Responsibility for their progress is often left to individual teachers who do not always have an overview of their performance or full information about their needs to then set work that is matched well to their ability.

Students are invariably well behaved in lessons and instances of disruption are extremely rare. However, they are often willing to sit and listen to their teacher rather than becoming actively involved in the lesson. When they finish a piece of

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work, for example, they will sit quietly talking their neighbour, rather than telling the teacher they have nothing to do. When given a task, however, they concentrate fully and work hard to produce their best efforts. Students work exceptionally well in pairs or groups and the level of discussion is often outstanding. Higher ability students demonstrate their remarkable ability to reflect on the world around them in such discussions, contrasting their feelings with those of others in famine-torn areas, for example. Work is marked frequently, but often this is cursory, with just a tick instead of an explanation of how a higher grade could be achieved.

Students have an exceptionally well-developed set of moral values. They express strong views on discrimination and will not tolerate it. They are quick to not only to report but also to challenge any acts that they perceive as anti-social. Students who are refugees, for example, settle exceptionally quickly into the life of the school because they are welcomed with open arms by other students. Students play an outstanding role in the school, local and wider community. Older students, especially those from the sixth form, are trained to support younger ones in both their academic and personal development. Students take part in a vast range of community activities. They raise in excess of £7,000 every year for charity, often through activities they have initiated, planned and carried through themselves. They then follow the trail of the money raised so they can see exactly what impact their efforts are having on those less fortunate than themselves, which in turn helps them to understand how those from different backgrounds live their lives.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	1
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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

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

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Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach, so are quickly able to answer questions that go beyond the content of the lesson. Teachers get on well with their students, which gives students confidence in being able to ask questions. All students are often given the same task in lessons, irrespective of their ability, especially in English and mathematics. The most able students finish before others. They either have to wait while others catch up, or a new task is given to the whole class, leaving lower and middle ability students struggling to keep up. This is in contrast to an outstanding French lesson, for example, in which a wide range of extension activities were available and given to individual students exactly when they needed them so all made exceptional progress.

The school utilises its good partnerships with others to provide a wide range of vocational courses which are matched well to students’ needs. Students study more subjects to GCSE level than is usually seen because they take extra ones in Years 9 and 10. The curriculum is enhanced well through memorable activities such as ‘deep learning’ events, which are much enjoyed by students. These successfully promote aspects such as healthy lifestyles and understanding of how to keep safe. A very wide range of extra clubs and activities are on offer, with over 60% of students taking part in six or more.

The school has a strong ethos of caring for all and developing respect for others. Expectations of how students will behave towards others are high, and result in students’ outstanding moral and social development. Students feel very safe in school because they trust staff to take good care of them. The good work on attendance ensures that it continues to improve. Most students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are supported well, although some opportunities are missed to reintegrate excluded pupils as quickly as possible. Students are well informed about choices of examination courses and careers options, and prepared well for life outside of school. The school’s specialist status is used well to support other schools in the promotion of learning in science.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides a strong moral lead that is followed by all staff and ensures a consistent and successful drive to promote students’ personal development. As a result, students’ personal development has improved since the

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school was last inspected and some aspects are now outstanding. Provision for equality is good. It is not outstanding because of the gap in performance between the small number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and others. The school is exceptionally proactive and successful in tackling issues around discrimination and promoting a sense of ‘fairness for all’ among students. Good adaptations have been made to buildings in order to support the integration of disabled pupils. The drive for academic improvement has been less successful, because the monitoring of teaching is less rigorous than that of other aspects of the school’s work. There is no formal record of the detail of lesson observations and any significant variation in their quality. As a result, senior and middle leaders are unable to refer back to previous monitoring in order to see what improvements were necessary, or to use the results to obtain a clear picture of the key strengths and weaknesses across a subject that could then be used as targets in development plans. The school is rich in data and much of it is analysed well.

Members of the governing body play a good part in leading the school. They are challenging, well-informed and supportive. Their financial management has been excellent. They are especially vigilant over safeguarding matters, keeping a close eye on all aspects and resulting in good safeguarding provision across the school. Their monitoring of safeguarding is extremely thorough. The school’s leaders have carried out a detailed audit of the provision for community cohesion. Good links with local schools, voluntary groups, charities and international organisations have enabled the school to provide well on a local and international scale. The school is regarded well by parents and carers who are provided with good quality information on school events and their children’s progress.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3

Sixth form

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

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The sixth form is being driven forward by good leadership and management that are overcoming past deficiencies in performance. Results improved dramatically in 2011 as improvements to the provision made by the new head of sixth form started to show their impact. The policy of entering all students for examinations in general studies, which resulted in too heavy a burden on students, was scrapped. This helped to raise achievement and wiped out the underachievement of previous years. Results were average in 2011 and reflected students’ satisfactory progress. The proportions of students not going into further education, employment or training were very low. Teaching is satisfactory. Students are conscientious in their studies, but are often passive in lessons, relying on their teachers to tell them things rather than be made to think for themselves. Teachers are well qualified, but sometimes miss opportunities to extend students’ learning by moving them on to more difficult tasks at appropriate times. Systems for monitoring attendance and students’ participation in private study have been introduced, along with a programme of regular mentoring for students. These have all helped students to concentrate more effectively on their studies in a supportive environment. Students’ views are sought and acted upon, so they feel that they have a part to play in the development of the sixth form. Good links with a nearby academy have increased the range of courses on offer to students.

These are the grades for the sixth form

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

Views of parents and carers

A relatively high proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Some felt unable to respond to some questions as their children had only been at the school for a short time. Parents and carers are generally very pleased with all that the school provides. They hold views that are similar to inspectors in most respects. Inspectors found teaching to be satisfactory, rather than good. A few parents and carers were concerned that the school was not helping them to support their children’s learning at home. Inspectors checked day books, comments made by teachers on students’ work and a sample of annual reports. They found that, while most information was of good quality, comments on students’ work were not providing a sufficient basis for them, or their parents and carers, to understand what was needed to improve the work.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cardinal Griffin Catholic High School 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 378 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 985 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	175	46	189	50	10	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	199	53	174	46	2	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	165	44	177	47	10	3	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	152	40	169	45	23	6	5	1
The teaching is good at this school	150	40	191	51	11	3	2	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	120	32	189	50	36	10	6	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	116	31	202	53	28	7	2	1
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)	134	35	198	52	10	3	2	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	145	38	189	50	18	5	5	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	151	40	173	46	24	6	4	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	102	27	187	49	28	7	5	1
The school is led and managed effectively	157	42	184	49	11	3	4	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	195	52	159	42	12	3	3	1

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



5 October 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Cardinal Griffin Catholic High School, Cannock WS11 4AW

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited your school. We were extremely impressed by the way you take every opportunity to play a part in the school and local community. The amounts you have raised for charities are truly remarkable and reflect your deep interest in helping those less fortunate than yourselves. You show a great capacity to think about those around you and reflect on important matters. The levels of discussions that we heard were outstanding. You have a very clear set of moral values that you put into practice in your day to day lives. You told us that you enjoy coming to school and that it is a safe place to learn. We agree.

We found that you are receiving a satisfactory education. The school promotes your personal development well. Your academic achievement is satisfactory; you do as well as expected given your attainment on joining the school. We have asked your teachers to increase your rate of progress by always setting you tasks that move your learning on, and ensuring that you do not have to wait for others to finish before starting a new task. You can help by telling your teachers as soon as you have finished your work. We have also asked them to give you better feedback, so you know what to do in order to improve. Some students, particularly who need extra help in lessons, do not make as much progress as others. We have asked the school to check their progress more carefully and tell teachers which ones are falling behind, so they can focus their lesson plans more accurately on meeting such students' needs.

Your school has made steady progress since it was last inspected. In order to help it improve more quickly we have asked the headteacher and other senior leaders to improve the systems for checking on the quality of teaching you receive.

Yours sincerely

David Driscoll
Lead inspector

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