

Cardinal Newman Catholic High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111456
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	378309
Inspection dates	21–22 November 2011
Reporting inspector	David Scott

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	791
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Heelam
Headteacher	Stephen Clarke (Executive)
Date of previous school inspection	4 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning, in almost all cases, accompanied by members of the senior leadership team, in 26 part-lessons and saw 25 teachers. Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, head of school, senior and middle leaders, two members of the governing body, staff, students and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at self-evaluation documentation, monitoring and assessment information, lesson plans, school policies and the school's safeguarding procedures. They analysed questionnaires from 102 students, 133 parents and carers and 24 staff.

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

- The impact of school actions to raise attainment across all subjects and to eliminate any significant variations between them.
- The effectiveness of assessment in ensuring that all students make equal progress including more-able students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The impact of actions to overcome weaknesses identified in the previous inspection and whether the school has a satisfactory or better capacity for sustained improvement.

Information about the school

Cardinal Newman Catholic High School is smaller in size than most secondary schools. Few students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students who are from minority ethnic groups is well below average. The largest group of students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is average. One in five students, a proportion that is average, have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school is a specialist mathematics and computing college and has gained the Artsmark Gold award and the Healthy Schools status. Cardinal Newman became part of a hard federation with St Gregory's Catholic High School in 2009.

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

2

Main findings

Cardinal Newman Catholic High School provides a satisfactory standard of education, but one that is improving steadily under the positive leadership of the executive headteacher. The school is a welcoming and harmonious community where students are happy and behave well. Students' awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues and respect for diversity are good. These aspects are promoted well through reflective tutorial time and thought-provoking assemblies involving drama presentations by older students.

The school has undergone recent significant changes of senior leaders and teaching staff, mainly because of restructuring since becoming part of a federation. The school's priority during this period has been to re-establish a shared vision among all staff in order to raise attainment. The recent federation partnership is working well together and has begun to make a significant impact on the quality of provision. In addition, through the mathematics and computing specialism outreach programme good links have been established between the partner primary schools.

Students' attainment is average and improving. Progress and learning are improving securely, as is students' enjoyment of school life. This is demonstrated in the marked improvement in their attendance since the last inspection, which is now above average. Students' progress accelerates as they move through the school so that their achievement is satisfactory.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory and sometimes good or better. When learning activities enable students to be active and where they are well matched to their skills and enthusiasm, their progress accelerates and attitudes to learning are positive. However, this is not always the case in all lessons. Leaders know that the quality of assessment practice across the school is variable and the good practice is not shared well enough through coaching and mentoring to ensure consistency and secure further improvements. In addition, teachers do not routinely take opportunities to promote students' literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects.

Senior leaders regularly use monitoring information, with increasing accuracy, to identify what the school does well and to plan for improvement and raise aspirations. Their self-evaluation is effective and identifies the right priorities for development. The monitoring of teaching and its impact on learning is becoming increasingly rigorous and leading to improvements in students' progress. However, not all leaders

and managers use clear criteria to evaluate the success of the measures taken to improve teaching in order to judge the impact on students' achievement. Members of the governing body meet their statutory responsibilities well and are increasingly effective in challenging the school's academic performance. Since the last inspection, the school has sustained effective practice in supporting students' good personal development, reduced exclusions, raised attainment and improved levels of attendance significantly. These successful actions demonstrate good capacity to make further improvements.

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen teaching to accelerate students' progress in lessons and raise attainment in all subjects by:
 - ensuring all teachers provide challenging activities that are matched to the needs of all students and that promote active learning
 - supporting the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills consistently across all subjects
 - ensuring teachers routinely ask probing questions across all subject areas, which give students opportunities to develop their thinking skills and explain their ideas fully, particularly for the more able
 - reviewing targets more systematically with students so that they clearly understand what to do to improve their work.

- Further improve the effectiveness of the leadership and management of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring all leaders and managers consistently use clear criteria for evaluating the impact of teaching on students' achievement
 - sharing the good practice in assessment across the school through coaching and mentoring to ensure consistency.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students enter the school with average levels of skills and by Year 11, reach broadly average levels of attainment. This is largely because many students have experienced a legacy of too variable teaching in the past which has impeded their progress and attainment, with some having a poor record of attendance. Students are motivated to learn because of the good relationships with staff and each other. They behave well in lessons and have a growing desire to improve their learning, particularly when teaching challenges them effectively. For example, in a Year 7 girls' physical education lesson, students were enthusiastically engaged in developing their techniques in Yoga. They were very well motivated and skilled at assessing each other's performance and suggesting points for improvement and actively engaged with their own learning. Similarly, in a Year 9 English lesson based on the book 'The boy in the striped pyjamas', students were engaged in examining photographs and placing them in sequence in order to tell the story. As a result of the teachers' very

effective questioning, students responded very well with high-quality extended answers. This generated a very healthy group discussion as students prepared for writing the narrative, and as a result, learning flourished.

Students' progress is accelerating as they move through the school. Through changes to the curriculum and the more systematic monitoring of the work of departments, unevenness in the performance of different groups is gradually being eliminated. For example, performance data suggested boys were doing better than girls in reading and writing and this gap has been closed by helping girls to improve their literacy skills. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make satisfactory progress. This is as a result of good guidance and one-to-one support. The appointment of an attendance officer has enabled the school to work assiduously with students, parents and carers to emphasise the importance of good attendance, and the rate has improved markedly since the previous inspection. The number of persistent absentees has reduced significantly. Students are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their career.

Through the work associated with the national awards, students have a mature appreciation of the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and regularly participate in many sporting and physical pursuits. They report that they feel very safe at school and are confident that the rare cases of bullying are addressed promptly. Students are keen to take on responsibilities and report the value of the school council, whose views are regularly discussed at meetings with senior staff. For example, students successfully canvassed opinion to improve the range and choice of school meals. Older students act as 'Guardian Angels' to other students in order to help them enjoy school life to the full and to give advice on a range of issues.

Students make a good contribution to their local community, for example by fund-raising for the local hospice and for good causes in Warrington. They contribute more widely through partnerships with charities overseas by donating their football kits to disadvantaged children in Africa.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	3
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	
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	3
Taking into account:	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹The 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?

The school is rightly proud of its good quality pastoral support and guidance. Students, whose circumstances make them most vulnerable benefit from a wide range of support and from partnerships with external agencies which enable them to play a full part in school life. The school has worked successfully with families to improve students' attendance which is now above average. Staff help students to overcome difficult and challenging episodes in their lives. The inclusion team is increasingly successful at engaging with families to promote students' attendance, learning and well-being.

Although the overall quality of teaching is strengthening, it does not consistently enthuse students with a love of learning or an appreciation of how learning relates to their everyday lives. Since the previous inspection, improvements have been made in the tracking of students' progress and the use of assessment to promote learning, for example, through strengthening teachers' questioning techniques to deepen students' understanding, particularly for the more able. However, this good practice has not been routinely shared across all subject areas and, as a result, the impact is variable. In some lessons, teachers' explanations are too long so that students are not actively engaged in learning, or given questions that challenge and help them to develop their thinking skills. The targets set for students are not always reviewed systematically enough with them so they understand how to improve their work.

The curriculum has recently been reorganised and is increasingly effective at meeting the needs and interests of all students, for example through the introduction of new vocational courses in Years 10 and 11. Students experience a range of activities: guest speakers, productions, talent shows and clubs, ranging from astronomy to Mandarin, which enhance the curriculum. This, together with visits and residential trips, provides opportunities for students to broaden their personal, social and scholastic skills. The range of opportunities provided for students to develop their literacy and numeracy skills, although increasing and contributing to the improving progress, is not yet consistent across all subject areas. In collaboration with their peers from the federation school, students regularly work with representatives from the local community on joint business and leadership projects.

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?

Progress and learning are accelerating at Cardinal Newman because of the determination and vision of the executive headteacher, with the support of all staff, to ensure that students leave school with the necessary skills to 'achieve their full potential'. Working closely with the executive headteacher, the head of school and senior team have established new systems for quality assurance, with clear lines of

accountability which are focused on raising achievement. Strategies for tackling weaker teaching have been implemented. Consequently, teaching is improving, and learning and progress are beginning to accelerate.

The school is taking steps to ensure every student has an equal chance to learn and tackles any discrimination appropriately. Actions taken by leaders are gradually eliminating variations in learning and progress. Members of the governing body are supportive of the school and fulfil their statutory duties well. They have a good understanding of the needs of the community the school serves. They are increasingly confident at challenging and holding the school to account with regard to students’ academic performance. The school has good procedures for safeguarding and risk assessment. These meet government guidelines and include high quality checks on adults and a carefully planned approach to managing child protection. Community cohesion is good because leaders have an effective understanding of their own community and the different faiths, ethnicities and cultures within it. Through its work associated with the national arts awards the school’s international links are expanding and promote good awareness of global issues, for example, through Commonwealth days and themed weeks based on the artistic and cultural traditions of different countries, such as China and India.

These are the grades for the 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	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	3
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

Views of parents and carers

Almost all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires were positive about the school and felt it keeps students safe and helps them to enjoy their time at school. The school’s own recent surveys of parents' and carers’ views were similarly positive.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cardinal Newman 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 133 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 791 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	66	50	64	48	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	73	55	58	44	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	47	35	75	56	7	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	62	47	57	43	6	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	60	45	66	50	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	25	82	62	11	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	19	97	73	4	3	1	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)	48	36	71	53	2	2	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	47	35	76	57	3	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	52	39	73	55	3	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	26	77	58	3	2	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	54	41	72	54	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	69	52	61	46	2	2	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

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 is 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.



23 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Cardinal Newman Catholic High School, Warrington, WA4 1RX

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting and seeing you at work and recreation. We very much valued the discussions we had with you and were particularly pleased to see how your attendance has improved since the previous inspection.

You go to a satisfactory school and your progress is beginning to accelerate. You, and your parents and carers, told us that Cardinal Newman is a caring and happy place where you feel very safe. You behave well and have a mature appreciation and respect for your teachers and each other.

All staff are determined to help you succeed and give you the best possible education. We have asked them to:

- plan work that will challenge and engage you actively, by developing your speaking and number skills in all subjects
- give you clearer advice on how to improve your work so that you can achieve your very best
- ask you more probing questions that develop your thinking skills, particularly for the more able
- ensure that all staff apply clear success criteria when judging the effectiveness of their teaching on improving your achievement
- ensure that all staff receive the necessary coaching and training in order to improve their teaching to give you consistent feedback on your work.

You, too, can play your part in improving the school by continuing to attend regularly and working hard to achieve your targets and by following your teachers' advice when your work is marked. Once again, it was very good to meet you all and I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Scott
Lead inspector

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