

# Cardinal Newman Catholic School

Warden Hill Road, Luton, LU2 7AE

**Inspection dates** 10–11 December 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The school provides a good education for its students. This good provision includes their personal development as well as academic achievement.
- Students who need extra help are given good support. As a result, they are making at least as good progress as others and the gaps between different groups are closing.
- Teaching is good. Some is outstanding and no teaching is inadequate.
- Teachers have high expectations of their students. They plan challenging and interesting lessons, as a result, students achieve well.
- Students behave well in lessons. Around the school they are very polite, friendly and helpful. They say they are safe in school and parents agree.
- Students' results are above average in English and mathematics. The progress that students make in these subjects is better than in most schools.
- The sixth form is good. The programmes that students study meet requirements and they make good progress.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have worked hard to improve teaching and raise standards. Subject leaders have key roles in these areas.
- The governing body is effective and shares the school's high ambition. They make sure that staff are held to account for the school's performance and the quality of teaching.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a small minority of lessons, progress is slowed because activities are not set at the right level of difficulty for all ability groups.
- Teachers do not always check that students act on the very good feedback their marking provides, so that improvement is made.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 63 lessons, of which six were joint observations with senior leaders. The team also made a number of shorter visits to lessons in order gain evidence of the quality of support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs, as well as those receiving extra help with literacy and numeracy.
- They held discussions with students, senior leaders, teaching staff, representatives of the governing body, the local authority and the school chaplain.
- They checked students' books as well as a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and information about students' progress. Inspectors also looked at documents relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- In planning and carrying out the inspection, the inspection team considered the 27 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as the school's own parent, student and staff surveys.
- The inspection team took account of 21 Ofsted questionnaires completed by staff.

## Inspection team

Keith Thomas, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Bruce Clark	Additional Inspector
David Bowles	Additional Inspector
Kevin Harrison	Additional Inspector
Rosemary Litawski	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average secondary school.
- Students are of a range of ethnic groups, the largest of which are White British, any other White background and Black African.
- The proportions of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are broadly average.
- The proportion of students who speak, or are believed to speak, English as an additional language is significantly above average.
- The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for specific students, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and in the care of the local authority) is below average.
- A small number of students attend off-site provision at Barnfield College.
- The school belongs to Luton Futures, a group which includes eight local secondary headteachers, the Thinking Schools Partnership, a national secondary school network, and the St Albans Deanery Partnership, a link with local Catholic primary schools.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum levels expected for students' attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of teaching that is outstanding by:
  - checking that activities in lessons are at the right level to make sure students of different abilities make rapid progress
  - making sure that teachers check that students follow up on feedback from marking, and make the necessary improvements to their work
  - sharing the best teaching practice in the school, to widen awareness of how different strategies can be used to promote more effective learning.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Most students begin at the school with attainment levels that are broadly in line with national averages. They make good progress throughout the school. For students who left the school last year, the percentages who made or exceeded expected progress in English and mathematics were all above average.
- Students' GCSE results are usually above average. While overall attainment in 2013 was lower than the previous year, the proportion of students gaining five A\* to C grades rose. This group of students made good progress given that they entered the school with previous attainment that was significantly below average.
- Students in the current Year 11 are on track to achieve results significantly above the 2013 national average. Scrutiny of school records, students' work and lesson observations show that progress in all other year groups and in all subjects, is good.
- In the sixth form, comprehensive systems are in place to make sure that students' progress is carefully tracked and underperformance quickly identified and rectified. Historically, A-level and AS-level attainment has been lower than national figures. In the last three years, all gaps have been closed or overtaken. Students are achieving well.
- The provision for disabled students and those who have special educational needs is good. Accurate identification of need, well-planned intervention and careful monitoring of progress all contribute to the good learning experienced by these students.
- The school provides a wide range of opportunity for students to develop skills in reading, literacy and numeracy. As a result, students from all ethnic groups, and those whose first language is not English, become very confident in their abilities and make the best progress they can, not only in English and mathematics, but also in all other subjects.
- The impact of pupil premium funding is good. In 2013, GCSE results for eligible students in Year 11 were about two thirds of a grade behind their classmates in mathematics and in English. This was a smaller gap than has been typical nationally. Progress rates for eligible students are increasing rapidly as the results of a reduction in the size of some classes, increased literacy and numeracy support programmes and mentoring activities take effect.
- A significant number of students are behind in English and mathematics when they start in the school and are eligible for Year 7 'catch-up' funding. By testing students as they arrive and carefully monitoring their progress, the school is able to show the success of its innovative support activities in literacy and numeracy. Of the students who entered the school lagging behind in 2012, two thirds had reached expected age-related levels by the start of Year 8.
- The school has very good systems to collect and analyse students' performance data, which provides invaluable information to inform teachers' planning. This also means that the progress of individual students and specific groups can be easily monitored during lesson observations.
- The school no longer enters students early for GCSE examinations. In the past, early entry for mathematics has not had an adverse impact on students' results. More-able students achieve well in lessons and in examinations.

- The small numbers of students who attend alternative provision are carefully monitored to ensure that they attend regularly and achieve well. School reports indicate that they are successful at the provision and also show improved attitudes to their studies in school. Most students make expected progress in English and mathematics and all move on to further study or employment with training.

### **The quality of teaching** is good

- Teaching is good throughout the school, and at times it is outstanding. English, mathematics and a range of other subjects are effectively taught and as a result, students achieve well.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and teach enthusiastically. In a Year 13 English lesson, the teacher's passion for the subject engaged students fully so that they were able to move rapidly towards a more complete understanding of a challenging text. Excellent feedback also contributed to the students' outstanding progress.
- When preparing lessons, teachers aim high and they plan activities that challenge their students to improve their performance. In a Year 8 dance lesson, the teacher encouraged students to improve their routines through detailed interpretation of some unfamiliar music from Chile. The teacher's skilful questioning and use of students to assess each other's work resulted in exceptional progress.
- Although planning is generally very good, in a few lessons, tasks do not fully challenge all groups of students. As a result, occasionally, a few students make too little progress.
- Work is regularly marked and students say that they find the comments helpful. However, teachers do not always make sure that their comments have been acted upon so that pupils learn from them.
- Numeracy and literacy skills are regularly reinforced in lessons across the school. For example, in a Year 7 design technology lesson, students who were about to complete an evaluation of their work were reminded of the need for good spelling, punctuation and grammar and to use extended vocabulary in their writing.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good and some is outstanding. Good questioning engages students in appropriately mature discussion, which contributes to the good progress they make in lessons.
- The relationship between teachers and students is an important strength. Teachers encourage their students to be confident in offering answers and to discuss them with other students, helping them to improve. Praise is used appropriately and students' achievements are frequently highlighted.
- Teaching assistants and support staff play an important role in making sure that students achieve well. Their teamwork is evident in lessons. They know the students well and respond quickly to any specific needs in order to support learning. In the best lessons, the teacher gives clear direction to assistants, through verbal instruction or a written lesson plan.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- The school is an orderly community. Students know the rules and are courteous and respectful

to each other, adults and visitors. They spoke openly to inspectors and displayed a genuine sense of pride in their school.

- Students told inspectors that disruption in lessons is rare and when it occurs it is quickly dealt with. They feel safe and are made aware of how to recognise dangers that may exist beyond school.
- The school provides sufficient opportunity for students to learn about different types of bullying. They say that it is rare and always dealt with. Scrutiny of school records shows that this is accurate.
- The school makes a significant effort to understand the views of staff, students and parents through their own surveys. The results show that there are few concerns about the way students behave or the frequency of bullying.
- Students' attitudes to learning are extremely positive and make a strong contribution to the quality of teaching and learning. Students know they are expected to work and are enthusiastic in their efforts to do their best in lessons and other activities.
- Students are keen to take responsibility within the school and are given many opportunities to do so. They value taking on roles such as Year 11 peer mentors, who help younger students to settle into school, and some sixth form students are trained to be learning support partners. The school council and parliament are influential, for instance in giving students' views on how to improve teaching and learning.
- The school has worked hard to develop alternatives to exclusion, such as behaviour support and anger management courses. As a result, exclusion has fallen sharply over a three-year period and is now in line with national figures.
- Students arrive on time for school and are ready to learn. They are punctual to lessons and properly equipped for their activities. There are very good systems in place to promote and monitor attendance. This has resulted in a significant improvement and attendance is now above average.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The ambition and determination of the headteacher and senior leaders to do well is evident in all of the school's work. Self-evaluation is accurate. Leaders know what needs to be done to continue to be successful and have successfully addressed the areas for improvement from the previous inspection.
- A detailed programme of lesson observation by leaders and managers, linked to appropriate training where necessary, has resulted in continuous improvements in the quality of teaching. There have so far been limited opportunities for teachers to observe each other, in order to learn from the best practice in the school.
- The school works well with agencies such as the local authority and the headteachers and staff of the schools within its three key partnerships. This displays a real sense of willingness to learn from and help others, in order to improve outcomes for all students.
- The school has effective policies to guide the work of the school in all areas. For instance, the appraisal of teachers is comprehensive and successful and has played a large part in making

sure that teaching and improved outcomes for students have followed.

- The successful development of subject leaders has been a very important area and has contributed substantially to improvement since the last inspection.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Leaders set high aspirations for its students and ensure they have very good advice and guidance so that they can make properly informed decisions about their futures. As a result, students make good progress while in the sixth form and are clear about the routes they intend to take upon leaving school.
- The curriculum is carefully constructed to meet the needs of students and to develop their academic and personal potential to the full. The timetable is enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular activities and events, which make use of local community resources and facilities.
- The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a real strength. This is reflected both within the formal curriculum and other activities. For example, there is a strong tradition of fundraising among students, who are always prompt to respond to the difficulties faced by those locally or abroad.
- There is a good programme of assemblies, which offers students opportunities to reflect on some of life's deeper issues. For instance, in one assembly students were given the opportunity to reflect on and share their experiences of cancer within their families.
- Careful attention is paid to safeguarding and child protection procedures and statutory requirements are met.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance is good. The governing body is properly organised to play its full part in the life of the school. A carefully planned annual programme of meetings, visits and training activities means that all governors are able to contribute to the school's development. They evaluate carefully how the pupil premium is used and are clear about its impact. They understand the teacher appraisal system and what is done to tackle any underperformance. They know that teachers' objectives are linked to improved outcomes for students and that pay progression is dependent on these being achieved. Governors are well trained in evaluating the comprehensive sets of student performance data that they receive from the school. They share the high ambition of the headteacher and staff, know the school's strengths and challenge effectively in areas where improvement is needed.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	109699
<b>Local authority</b>	Luton
<b>Inspection number</b>	433151

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1435
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	200
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Caroline Maloney
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jane Crow
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 March 2011
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