

Cardinal Pole Roman Catholic School

Morning Lane, Hackney, London E9 6LG

Inspection dates

17–18 January 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils receive a good-quality education at Cardinal Pole. They are prepared very well for their future careers.
- The school fosters pupils' personal development and welfare extremely well. It tackles the difficulties pupils face head on and makes a significant difference to their life chances.
- Leadership is principled and robust. Difficult decisions are taken in the interests of pupils. This creates a strong climate in which high expectations are the norm.
- Senior leaders and governors tackle areas that need improving thoroughly. As a result, last year's fall in English and science examination results has been reversed.
- The sixth form is outstanding. High-quality teaching and excellent support give students real opportunities to reach their potential.
- Pupils achieve well in their studies, including the most able pupils and those that are disadvantaged. In the sixth form, students' achievements are first class.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are outstanding. Relationships are positive. Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is solidly good. Pupils are well mannered and thoughtful of others.
- Effective teaching and high-quality support means that pupils make swift progress with their learning. However, teaching does not make the most of teachers' expertise and pupils' attention in class. Consequently, not all pupils achieve at the very highest levels.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make greater use of the strengths of teachers' expertise, and pupils' engagement in their lessons, to challenge and stretch all pupils so that their achievement improves further.
- Consolidate the improvements made to pupils' outcomes in English, science, physical education and design and technology.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, senior leaders, governors and staff are highly ambitious for the school and its pupils. They share the same high aspirations and expect the most from themselves and their pupils. This creates a real sense of purpose and puts the interests of pupils first. As a result, leadership has a strong impact on pupils' learning and their life chances.
- Middle leaders are equally ambitious for their subject and have a clear understanding of the school's priorities. They are held to account for performance in their area and supported effectively by senior leaders in equal measure. Inspectors were struck by the morale of staff who say that leaders, including the headteacher, are approachable and supportive.
- Senior leaders evaluate the school's performance rigorously and have a realistic understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They use this understanding to drive improvement and to ensure that pupils get the best deal possible from their education. For example, leaders have taken firm action to improve examination results in English and science, including making changes to staffing. There are clear signs that pupils' achievement in these subjects is picking up, although leaders recognise that there is still more to do in science.
- The successful work to improve achievement in English has enabled the school to develop literacy in other subjects. For example, pupils write at length in humanities and develop their vocabulary well. Pupils' use of their mathematical knowledge across other subjects is not as well developed, although it is evident in science.
- The school has reliable systems to track pupils' progress and identify those who are falling behind in their work. This tracking is linked to the work of heads of year so that the school can identify whether pupils have experiences outside of school that make learning difficult. As a result, pupils are provided with a broad range of help and support, including counselling, special programmes and additional lessons on Saturdays. A residential trip for Year 11 boys last year proved especially effective and is being repeated this year, particularly for average-attaining boys. Support for a group of girls is also being planned as part of the work to develop a culture where learning is seen by pupils as 'cool'. The school's work to help all pupils, regardless of their need, demonstrates its commitment to equality.
- While the school recognises that it is not always successful in helping pupils to overcome barriers to learning, the vast majority benefit from the support they receive. For example, a programme to improve the behaviour of a small group of Year 8 boys is making a noticeable difference to their attitudes to school. Similarly, the school is highly successful in involving Traveller children and their families and promoting positive attitudes to learning. This work is driven by the passion of the headteacher and the strong support of senior leaders.
- The curriculum is suitably broad and provides the range of subjects and experiences that motivate pupils effectively. It is extended appropriately by a range of after-school activities. While there is a clear focus on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, other

areas of the curriculum are well represented and some perform especially well. For example, pupils do well in modern languages and in humanities. Where performance is less strong, for example in physical education (PE) and design and technology, leaders have taken well-judged actions to improve pupils' achievements.

- Leaders evaluate the additional funding the school receives carefully. This means that the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up money is used effectively to boost pupils' progress and self-confidence. Interventions are quickly replaced if they are found not to be working well. For example, the use of external mentors was dropped because it was not making enough of a difference to pupils' outcomes. A new approach, using graduates to coach and support groups of pupils, was introduced in September 2015 and is showing a more positive impact on pupils' achievements.
- The funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is also used well. As with the pupil premium, the school reviews the impact of its work on pupils' outcomes and makes changes to its support programmes where appropriate. Teaching assistants and support staff are deployed effectively so that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported.
- Careers education and advice are strong. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to visit local industries and organisations. For example, some Year 10 pupils attended an architecture and engineering trip to the City of London to learn about career opportunities in the construction industry. These opportunities ensure that pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very effectively. The school's Catholic ethos provides a clear moral and spiritual framework and underpins the school's approach to developing pupils' personal skills and an understanding of the wider society. The well-planned personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme covers a wide range of relevant topics from sex and relationships and health to careers education, democracy and British values. For example, last year pupils took part in a 'mock' referendum on whether to leave the European Union. Pupils visit the Houses of Parliament and take part in debates. Understanding of different religious traditions is promoted effectively through religious education lessons.
- Senior leaders from Cardinal Pole are frequently used by the local authority to provide support to other schools. For example, staff have led work on helping other schools improve their sixth-form provision.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a clear understanding about the school's priorities. They receive helpful information about the school's performance, including assessment information. Governors have had appropriate training for safeguarding and some have received training in safer recruitment procedures. As a result, governors fulfil their responsibilities effectively. They challenge and support leaders in equal measure, ensuring that staff are held to account for pupils' outcomes.
- Governors use regular visits to the school to see for themselves how well the school is working. They use the information to make informed decisions, for example about the way the pupil

premium funding is used and how to tackle the school's priorities. Teachers' performance is managed well through a clear appraisal system that is linked to salary increases.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Senior leaders are very careful to ensure that safeguarding procedures and practice work effectively. Record-keeping is secure and this allows staff to follow up issues vigilantly. There are strong links with external agencies, enabling leaders to tackle the wide range of needs. Staff work hard to support pupils and leave no stone unturned to make sure that they are kept safe. This ensures that there is a clear culture of safeguarding that puts the welfare of pupils first.
- Staff receive regular training so that they understand the range of child protection issues such as how to recognise the signs of abuse, including female genital mutilation, radicalisation and extremism, and the 'Prevent' duty. Policies are up to date and take account of the new requirements, including those related to understanding the appropriate safeguarding documents and guidance. This supports the school in its work to help pupils overcome the challenges they face in life and realise their potential.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils are taught well and consequently make brisk progress with their learning. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and translate these into well-planned programmes and challenging work. For example, planning in subjects such as humanities and religious education includes a clear focus on literacy and the PSHE programme covers a broad range of topics comprehensively.
- The school's systems to assess pupils' achievements give leaders accurate and realistic information. This also provides teachers with information about the current achievements of pupils in their class which they use to plan work that is appropriate for pupils of all abilities, including the most able and disadvantaged pupils. Occasionally, teachers do not use their expertise to ensure that all pupils are being challenged and stretched sufficiently, especially the most able pupils, who do not deepen their learning as much as they might.
- Teachers are often skilled at checking pupils' understanding throughout the lesson. This enables them to re-jig their plans to better meet pupils' learning needs. On occasion, teachers do not take advantage of pupils' positive attitudes to challenge their understanding and correct misconceptions quickly enough. However, senior leaders' knowledge of teaching quality across the school means that they are aware of these weaknesses and take quick and effective action to support improvement.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is strong and they use this to explain the task and clarify new or difficult concepts. This ensures that pupils understand what is expected of them. It also helps to create a very positive learning climate in classrooms. Pupils respond especially well to the work and their teachers. They are highly motivated, industrious and take pride in their work.

These attitudes contribute significantly to pupils' learning.

- Teachers often use questions effectively to draw out pupils' knowledge and understanding, and to stretch them to think more deeply about a problem or idea. Where this happens, pupils rise to the occasion and challenge themselves. For example, in a Year 8 mathematics lesson, the additional challenges given by the teacher encouraged pupils to work even harder. As a result, progress was brisk.
- The quality of support provided by additional adults in classrooms is often first-rate. Teaching assistants and support staff are well briefed by teachers and work effectively with those pupils who need extra support. Consequently, they have a positive impact on pupils' achievements.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. This is because senior leaders, governors and teachers develop pupils' personal skills effectively and put welfare at the top of their agenda. This includes ensuring that the alternative provision, where a few pupils spend some of their time studying elsewhere, promotes their welfare and personal skills effectively.
- Relationships between pupils are strong. Pupils show a great deal of respect for others and tolerance to those who are different. For example, in a religious education lesson, pupils showed a respectful understanding of the differences between Christianity and Judaism.
- Relationships between pupils and their teachers are also strong. Pupils are respectful of adults and are quick to respond to teachers' requests. Teachers model high personal standards and value pupils' differences, recognising them as individuals. They challenge stereotypes consistently as part of their everyday work.
- The school's work to develop what it calls 'restorative justice' is instrumental in promoting its commitment to pupils' welfare. The process has a significant impact on pupils' personal skills, helping them to take responsibility for the consequences of their actions. Pupils talk knowledgeably about the process and place great value on the outcomes. As one pupil noted, it teaches them life skills.
- Restorative justice also helps pupils develop their understanding of fundamental British values. These values underpin the school's approach to pupils' personal development and welfare. As a result, the great majority of pupils leave school understanding how to take their place in society.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are well behaved in lessons and around the school and conduct themselves with good humour and maturity. They are polite, well mannered and have excellent attitudes to their work. As a result, there is little disruption to lessons and pupils focus on their learning well.
- Pupils and staff noted the considerable improvement in behaviour in recent years. This is

because initiatives to improve behaviour are successful. For example, the 'school for hard knocks', which works with pupils at risk of exclusion, has helped boys stay in school and learn to take responsibility for their actions. As a result, the number of exclusions has fallen. Bullying is rare but when it does happen, pupils are confident that staff will deal with it effectively.

- Pupils' attendance is similar to that of other schools in England. Attendance fell slightly over the past three years but the school's current figures indicate that this is improving. Although leaders recognise that keeping absence low is a continuing challenge, there are robust systems to promote high levels of attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils achieve well and make brisk progress from their starting points. In 2016, examination results were broadly average and pupils made expected progress. Assessment information about current pupils, and work in their books, show that progress is improving, especially in English and science where achievement was disappointing last year.
- Achievement in mathematics, modern languages, history and economics was strong in the 2016 GCSE examinations. It was less good in PE and design and technology. However, leaders are taking effective action to improve pupils' achievements in these subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils, who make up much of the school population, are making similar progress as others nationally and in the school. This is the result of the school's aspirational climate, reliable systems for tracking pupils' progress and the range of effective strategies to support those falling behind.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, make at least expected progress from their starting points. There is a strong focus on stretching the most able and raising their aspirations. As a result, 95% of pupils go on to sustained education, employment or training after the age of 16, with the majority staying on in the sixth form.
- The school's assessment information predicts that by the end of this academic year attainment will be slightly higher than in 2016. Although these figures are tentative, the predictions for last year show that the school's assessments are accurate. This indicates that the school's projections for 2017 are likely to be met.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- Strong leadership and a highly aspirational outlook mean that provision in the sixth form is excellent. Senior leaders have a firm grasp on the quality of teaching and the performance of students. They use this effectively to ensure that all students are following programmes for which they are best suited and that teaching is of a high quality. Where subjects are underperforming or not successful, leaders take swift action to address this.
- Students make strong progress in their AS and A-level examinations. Achievement in business studies, history, economics, mathematics, psychology, religious education and Spanish are especially strong.
- A high proportion of students continue with their sixth form studies, with 95% moving from Year 12 to Year 13. Similarly, progression to education, employment or training is strong, as is the proportion going to top universities. In the current Year 13, 10 students have applied to Oxford or Cambridge universities and currently one has been offered a place. This illustrates the positive impact of teachers' high aspirations for their students.
- Students are confident learners and conduct themselves extremely well in lessons and around the school. They are encouraged to develop their social and personal skills most effectively through the wide range of opportunities to get involved in the life of the school. For example, sixth-form students work with younger pupils to create drama performances.
- Students are provided with a wide range of effective careers advice and guidance. For example, Year 13 students attend schemes at top universities such as Oxford, Cambridge, Bristol and Newcastle, to prepare themselves for their UCAS applications. Work experience at firms in the City or with government departments helps to prepare students for the world of work. Other opportunities include attending careers shows and programmes over the summer to develop their learning skills. As a result, students are extremely well prepared for the next stage in their careers.

School details

Unique reference number	100285
Local authority	Hackney
Inspection number	10023694

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,071
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	184
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father David Evans
Headteacher	Jane Heffernan
Telephone number	020 8985 5150
Website	www.cardinalpole.co.uk
Email address	janeheffernan@cardinalpole.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 January 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Cardinal Pole Catholic School is larger than the average secondary school in England. It has a

smaller proportion of girls than most schools.

- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is high.
- The proportion of pupils who receive special educational needs support is well above average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is also well above average.
- Six pupils currently attend alternative provision on other sites.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons across a range of year groups and subjects, including in the sixth form. All of these were jointly observed with school leaders.
- Inspectors also visited form time and looked at arrangements at break and lunchtime.
- Samples of pupils' work were looked at during the observation of lessons. A range of pupils' books was also looked at separately.
- Inspectors listened to pupils from Year 7 reading.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, including governors, subject leaders, new staff, pupils and representatives from the local authority.
- A range of documentation and policies were scrutinised including the school's self-evaluation, records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, minutes of meetings of the governing body, assessment information and school newsletters.
- Inspectors scrutinised records relating to the quality of teaching, and the school's website, including information about extra-curricular activities, trips and visits.
- Inspectors reviewed records, policies and procedures relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of the six responses to Ofsted's online survey. They also considered 42 responses to the survey of staff.

Inspection team

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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