

Inspection of Cardinal Newman College

Inspection dates: 7 to 10 February 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Education programmes for young people	Outstanding
Provision for learners with high needs	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Information about this provider

Cardinal Newman Sixth Form College is a Catholic college based in Preston, Lancashire. Students attend the college from a wide geographical area and a diverse range of backgrounds.

At the time of the inspection, 4,224 students were studying education programmes for young people. Of these, the vast majority study at level 3 on A-level programmes, vocational programmes or a blend of both A level and vocational courses. There were 46 students studying vocational programmes at level 2 alongside GCSE English and/or mathematics. There were 44 students in receipt of high-needs funding, 26 on a bespoke foundation learning programme and 18 who study A levels and/or vocational programmes. Leaders also offer T levels and degree programmes which were out of scope for this inspection.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Students are proud to attend Cardinal Newman Sixth Form College. They are overwhelmingly positive about the education that they receive and the care and support that staff give them during their time at college. Students thrive in the supportive and nurturing environment that leaders and staff have created.

Students have highly positive attitudes to learning. Attendance is very high. Students are committed to their studies and are highly motivated to achieve. Students' behaviour is exemplary. They are well mannered and polite. Cardinal Newman students are an asset to their college.

Teachers promote and advocate the 'Newman mindset'. This includes high expectations and aspirations for future life beyond college. Leaders and teachers provide highly effective careers advice and guidance to help students make well-informed choices about their next steps. Many students gain places at the university of their choice. Others progress onto apprenticeships and employment. Learners on foundation learning programmes benefit from meaningful work experience. They are ambitious and talk with confidence about their future.

Leaders provide an extensive array of activities that help students to develop their wider interests beyond their academic curriculum. Students participate in many clubs and societies such as the debating club and article writing for the Newman Times. Students enjoy overseas trips related to their interests. For example, science, technology and maths students visit the NASA space centre in Orlando, business students visit New York and geographers visit Iceland. Participation in trips and activities is very high.

Students feel valued because teachers take the time to get to know them well. Students are challenged to question the world around them respectfully while promoting and celebrating difference. Students have a good understanding of different faiths and beliefs. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain.

Students feel safe. Leaders and teachers provide training for students to protect themselves in a variety of situations such as drink spiking, forced marriage and grooming. Students are aware of how to keep themselves safe.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders work effectively with stakeholder partners such as the county council and the local enterprise partnership (LEP) to consider skills shortages. This helps them to provide a curriculum that contributes to meeting local, regional and national skills needs. Leaders continue to extend their curriculum offer in LEP priority areas such as digital and health sectors by offering T levels and the cyber-enhanced project qualification (EPQ).

Leaders have collaborated with a partner university to develop a mathematics school that provides opportunities for gifted and talented mathematicians to excel and pursue a specialist mathematics and, science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) curriculum. They provide an innovative approach to teaching mathematics in the local area and ensure that students develop the skills demanded in priority local industries, including energy, cyber, digital and advanced manufacturing.

Leaders remain focused on providing a level 3 curriculum that enables the majority of students to progress to higher level study. They work with universities to include additional topics in science that are required for entry to biomedical science degree programmes. They include additional qualifications for high-achieving students, including the EPQ in topics related to students' career aspirations and interests. This helps students to stand out from others on their university applications.

However, curriculum leaders recognise that they could do more to engage with stakeholders to plan the teaching of the curriculum. Most curriculum staff do not routinely involve stakeholders or work placement employers in the creation and delivery of the curriculum. This is an opportunity that employers told us they would value. Most teachers do not liaise with employers to link the vocational taught curriculum to the work placement activities and skills that employers provide.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders provide an ambitious, focused and high-quality curriculum offer. They provide a range of mostly level 3 courses to meet the needs of a diverse range of young people in the local area. This includes a broad variety of A level and vocational programmes to provide progression to university, apprenticeships or employment. Leaders provide a highly effective foundation learning programme for young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) that helps them to achieve in line with their peers and prepares them for their next steps in independence, further training or employment.

Teachers plan students' learning meticulously so that they gain a deep knowledge of the content but also develop high levels of transferable skills such as critical-thinking, problem-solving and data analysis. A-level sociology students learn about education to develop their evaluative skills before moving on to more complex topics such as beliefs and, crime and deviance. Level 2 business students learn about finance and marketing before completing a start-up business project. Students confidently move on to more complex tasks as they progress through their courses.

Leaders have a culture of high expectations where students are at the heart of their curriculum. They adopt a highly supportive and flexible approach to help students to gain a deeper understanding and to achieve the grades required for future study. Students who have gaps in their knowledge attend additional classes to recap key topics and to rectify misconceptions. Students benefit from the opportunity to restart

their courses if they have not made the expected progress. As a result, most students achieve high grades.

Staff are appropriately qualified to teach their subjects and are all subject experts. They are knowledgeable and exceptionally passionate which in turn enthuses the students they work with. Many staff work as standards verifiers or examiners for awarding organisations. They use this experience to better prepare students for examinations and assessments. For example, A-level biology teachers share key tips to gain extra marks such as identifying the random fusion of gametes as a cause for phenotypic variation.

Vocational teachers have relevant industry experience that they use exceptionally well to bring real-life examples into their teaching. For example, health and social care teachers discuss the impact of cardiovascular disease on adults in Preston when compared to people living in the south of England. This helps students to put theory into practice and prepares them well for future study and employment.

Teachers skilfully plan their lessons so that students learn new knowledge that builds on their prior learning. In A-level mathematics, students recall learning on the use of Venn diagrams to establish conditional probability. They use this learning to swiftly move on to carrying out conditional probability calculations. In A-level sociology, students discuss previous learning on gender to link this to the difference gender makes to religions and beliefs.

Teachers expertly tailor a highly individualised programme for students with high needs. They successfully combine relevant qualifications and non-accredited learning to plan the most appropriate learning programme for their students. The majority of students make exceptional progress.

Teachers provide thorough feedback to students that supports them effectively to improve the quality and accuracy of their work. A-level biology students are advised to use key scientific terminology, read questions carefully and highlight key words. A-level sociology students confidently structure essay questions and include evaluative comments, and theorists in their written work. This supports students to make rapid improvements and avoid repetition of errors. However, in level 2 business, teachers do not sufficiently develop students' English skills. As a result, a few students continue to make the same mistakes in spelling and punctuation as they progress through their course.

Support for students with SEND and students with high needs is highly effective. Students with hearing impairments use speech to text software, students with dyslexia use the appropriate tools for their need such as coloured paper, students with anxiety sit in the position in class that suits them most. Teachers of students with high needs are highly skilled and know their students very well. They understand what motivates them and how their barriers to learning present in an educational setting. Students with SEND and students with high needs make excellent progress and achieve in line with their peers.

Leaders monitor the quality of education effectively. They use a range of quality processes and procedures such as the student voice, assessment outcomes, learning observations and value-added data to identify the small number of subject areas that could be improved further. They put in place effective support strategies to help subject staff focus on actions to make rapid improvement.

Leaders are highly considerate of staff well-being and workload. Staff morale is exceptionally high. Staff feel the college is well led and managed and that they are trusted and valued by leaders. They describe a strong ethos and culture to support students to achieve their aspirations. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the high-quality education and the support that children in their care receive at the college. The vast majority of parents/carers would recommend the college to others.

Governors are suitably experienced to carry out their roles. They are passionate about the college, and many are alumni. Governors are aware of the strengths and areas that could be further improved. They are committed to supporting and challenging senior leaders. Governors support leaders in future planning with projects such as the mathematics school and further work on embedding sustainability into the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have appropriately trained and experienced designated safeguarding leads and deputies in place who carry out their roles effectively. Leaders provide appropriate training for staff on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Staff are aware of how to report a concern and the signs to look out for in students such as a change in appearance or an unusual absence pattern.

Leaders recruit staff safely and carry out a range of appropriate pre-employment checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with young people.

Leaders have appropriate safeguarding policies and procedure in place which they use effectively.

Leaders record, monitor and follow-up on safeguarding referrals and well-being concerns effectively. They refer students to external agencies where appropriate and ensure that the correct level of support is in place for vulnerable students.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130745
Address	Lark Hill Road Avenham Preston Lancashire PR1 4HD
Contact number	01772460181
Website	www.cardinalnewman.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Nick Burnham
Provider type	Sixth Form College
Date of previous inspection	May 2009
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice principal teaching and learning, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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