

# Inspection of a good school: Cardinal Newman Catholic School A Specialist Science College

Warden Hill Road, Luton, Bedfordshire LU2 7AE

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Inspection dates: 21 and 22 May 2024

## Outcome

Cardinal Newman Catholic School A Specialist Science College continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Mark McLaughlin. This school is part of The St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Catherine Davies.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel valued, whatever their background, within the Catholic identity of this school. Staff know pupils well and pupils know that staff are there to help them. This helps pupils to feel happy and safe. The school prioritises the well-being and personal development of pupils. They receive high-quality guidance and care.

All pupils, including students in the sixth form, learn about what good character is. They do this through the school's chosen character development programme. This teaches pupils how to 'live out the Newman way' through learning, love and faith.

Pupils attend school regularly and behave well. They are polite and courteous. They move around the site showing consideration for others.

Pupils access a broad, interesting range of subjects that challenge them academically. They typically achieve well. On occasions, pupils do not have the chance to extend and deepen what they learn. This can limit how well pupils learn more complex ideas.

Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to contribute to the life of the school. They can attend various clubs, visits and trips, for example not only sports clubs and performing arts clubs, but also debating, poetry by heart, modelling and sculpture clubs. These help pupils to develop their interests and talents.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The school has carefully thought through and planned the knowledge pupils should learn in each subject. The school has ensured that its curriculum is ambitious and develops what pupils learn over time. Pupils are well prepared with many options for their next steps in education, employment or training.

Staff have access to a high-quality programme of training and development. Consequently, teachers have the subject knowledge they need to teach the curriculum well. Teaching typically supports pupils to achieve well. Teachers provide clear explanations for pupils. They use strategies to check what knowledge pupils remember. For example, they set 'do now' activities at the start of lessons that help pupils to connect previous learning. These activities also allow teachers to spot and address any gaps in pupils' understanding effectively. In a few instances, some staff do not routinely provide activities to enable pupils to engage in deeper discussion or explore learning in more depth. When this happens, pupils do not develop a secure understanding of more complex knowledge.

Reading is a strength of the school. Staff provide targeted support that helps pupils who need help catch up. Sixth-form students help them to become better readers through paired reading. As a result, pupils become more confident and fluent readers. All pupils are encouraged to read widely and they enjoy reading.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are very well supported in the school and in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision). The school clearly identifies the needs of pupils with SEND and considers the adaptations they need. Staff provide effective support for pupils with SEND so that they achieve well and work independently to access the same curriculum as their peers.

Staff manage pupils' behaviour well. The school has ensured that pupils' behaviour is managed successfully through a culture of positive relationships. Pupils are typically focused and engaged in lessons. Pupils behave respectfully around the school. Behaviour around the site is respectful. The school has suitable systems in place to ensure and maintain good attendance.

Pupils receive effective careers guidance to help them make positive career choices. Pupils benefit from high-quality opportunities to experience the world of work. All Year 10 pupils complete a week of work experience and some sixth-form students volunteer to work for the national health service at the local hospital. Sixth-form students who wish to apply for apprenticeships or universities get highly useful additional support. As a result, students are successful in achieving places for which they have applied.

The school provides a variety of opportunities for pupils to contribute towards the life of the school. Pupils develop their leadership skills through a number of positions of responsibility. For example, the sixth-form chamber lead an inter-faith group to discuss religion and they also coordinate the work of reading ambassadors.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of enrichment opportunities, such as visits to the Globe theatre, Thorpe Park and a local hospice. These activities, along with the recently introduced 'culture day', develop pupils' understanding of society and the world they live in.

Trustees know the school well. They provide effective challenge and support for leaders. Leaders engage well with staff, who appreciate the consideration given to their workload and well-being. Teachers in the early stages of their teaching careers are well supported.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- On occasions, some teachers do not make the most appropriate teaching choices in order to make sure that learning activities are allowing all pupils to learn as much as they can. Where this is the case, pupils do not get sufficient opportunities to develop and extend their knowledge. This then limits how well they consolidate more complex knowledge. The school needs to further develop the work to ensure that all staff are able to implement highly effective teaching strategies consistently well.

## **Background**

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2018.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## **Further information**

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with SEND; pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	142310
<b>Local authority</b>	Luton
<b>Inspection number</b>	10318632
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,636
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	252
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Caroline Davies
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mark McLaughlin
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.cardinalnewmanschool.net">www.cardinalnewmanschool.net</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	5 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust.
- The headteacher took up post in April 2024.
- The school has a religious character, Roman Catholic, and was last inspected under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 on 16 and 17 June 2022. The school's next Section 48 inspection will be in five years.
- The school was forced to partially close from December 2023 until the end of January 2024 due a structural issue related to concrete in the ceilings.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND. There is a special educational needs unit for those with autism and also a unit for pupils with sight loss. There are 15 pupils aged 11 to 16 in this provision.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers, and six unregistered providers.

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors discussed the impact of the recent partial closure with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- To discuss governance, an inspector met with trustees, who included the chair of the board of trustees. Inspectors also met with local governors, who included one of the co-chairs of the governing body.
- Inspectors met with leaders, including the senior executive leader, the headteacher, the head of school, other senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, the designated safeguarding lead, the behaviour and personal development leads, the careers lead, school subject leaders and staff.
- An inspector spoke to a member of the Northampton Diocese to gather their views on the school.
- Deep dives were carried out in these subjects: art, English, geography, mathematics and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around school and at social times. Inspectors reviewed information and records of pupils' behaviour.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first. Inspectors also held meetings to explore attendance and use of alternative provision.
- Inspectors reviewed 79 responses, including 75 free-text responses, submitted to Ofsted Parent View during the inspection. Inspectors considered 67 responses to the staff survey and 17 responses to the pupil survey.

## Inspection team

Sue Pryor, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Jennifer Brassington	Ofsted Inspector
Elizabeth Shapland	Ofsted Inspector

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