



Cardinal Heenan Catholic High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104714
Local Authority Liverpool
Inspection number 287015
Inspection dates 18–19 October 2006
Reporting inspector Marguerite McCloy HMI

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

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|---|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Type of school | Secondary | School address | Honeys Green Lane |
| School category | Voluntary aided | | Liverpool |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 | | Merseyside L12 9HZ |
| Gender of pupils | Boys | Telephone number | 0151 2283472 |
| Number on roll (school) | 1261 | Fax number | 0151 2521246 |
| Number on roll (6th form) | 163 | | |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Mr Andrew Tremarco |
| | | Headteacher | Mr Dave Forshaw |
| Date of previous school inspection | 26 March 2001 | | |

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|---------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors. A section 48 inspection of the school's religious education and collective worship took place at the same time, carried out by members of the Liverpool Archdiocese.

Description of the school

Cardinal Heenan Catholic High School for boys is a larger than average comprehensive school situated on the outskirts of the city of Liverpool. The school is popular and over-subscribed. Although located in an area of mainly privately owned homes, it draws its pupils from a wide range of feeder parishes, including those in areas of social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, at 23%, is above average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is in line with the national average. Fewer than 4% of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and none are at an early stage of learning English. The school is a Specialist Sports College and is a member of the Specialist Schools Trust Most Improved Club. It also holds awards for Healthy Schools, Investors in People and Dyslexia Friendly Schools. It is a member of the East Liverpool Collaborative through which joint sixth form provision is organised alongside four other schools.

Key for inspection grades

| | |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features, particularly in its management of partnerships with other schools and outside agencies to enhance its provision. It is an inclusive school where all pupils are valued, as reflected in pupils' very good personal development and the school's high quality pastoral care and guidance.

The promotion of healthy living is an outstanding strength of this specialist sports college, which is at the leading edge of learning through sport and advocating exercise and a balanced diet. Despite significant difficulties presented by the poor standard of accommodation, pupils move sensibly and safely around the school and feel safe from bullying, which they say is dealt with effectively should any incidents occur.

Pupils achieve well. Attainment on entry to the school is average and standards reached at the end of Key Stage 4 are above average. The school has put in place measures to improve achievement at Key Stage 3, although this has yet to impact on test results which are average overall and weaker in mathematics and science than in English. Most pupils enjoy their learning because teaching is good overall and some is outstanding, characterised by enthusiasm and a good range of interesting activities. However, there are inconsistencies in the way in which teachers and managers make use of assessment information in order to identify underachievement and set specific targets to overcome it. Although some pupils are aware of their general targets, these are not specific enough to ensure that all are clear about how well they are doing and what must be done to reach the next level or grade.

The school's good curriculum has outstanding features such as the exciting range of sports-related activities and collaborative partnerships. A number of activities are arranged through which pupils are able to make a very positive contribution to the community. The impact of this can be seen in the strong sense of social responsibility and maturity of many pupils and sixth form students. The school equips pupils well to understand the world of work and develop the appropriate skills and attitudes valued by employers.

Good leadership and management have ensured that the school is recovering from the effects of a significant budget deficit and provides good value for money. The headteacher and senior leaders articulate a clear vision and high expectations of continuous improvement. Their accurate self-evaluation has identified areas of weakness which are being tackled with determination.

Governors play a full role in helping to shape the direction of the school's improvement and overcome the barriers created by its deteriorating premises. It is a constant concern for them to fully identify safety issues that require prompt action on a regular basis. The delay in rebuilding the school and the limited budget for resources threatens to restrict the rate of improvement. In the inspection questionnaires, the majority of parents expressed very positive views about the school. Some parents and carers share the concerns about the fabric of the building and feel that pupils and staff deserve better.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Good leadership has provided a clear direction for the development of courses that enable many students to continue their education who otherwise might not. The well managed collaborative partnership established with other schools plays a major part in helping to match courses to the wide range of students' needs.

Students achieve well, despite a substantial minority who enter the sixth form with below average starting points. Standards are broadly average for most subjects and courses. Nevertheless, for the majority of AS and A2 courses there is a lower than average proportion of the highest grades.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers build on good relationships to provide both support and challenge closely matched to students' needs. Students respond to work that is often related to the world of work and most make good progress.

Students acknowledge that they are provided with good guidance when choosing courses, or in preparation for the next stage of their education, and that they receive good support throughout their time in the sixth form. They know who to turn to if in difficulty. The school makes satisfactory use of assessment to check on students' progress through an established review process. Although relevant data is available, it is not consistently used well enough to identify underachievement at an early stage so that prompt action can be taken. This is particularly the case in relation to courses provided at other sites.

The curriculum is good with strengths in the breadth of provision resulting from the collaborative partnership and the enrichment opportunities that flow from the school's specialist status.

Students' personal development is good. The head of sixth form has established a clear focus on progression either into higher education or employment and this gives students a sense of purpose. Vocational courses and the many opportunities to contribute to the community extend learning and help develop students' confidence and independence.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in Key Stage 3, particularly in mathematics and science.
- Focus more sharply on the use of assessment data to help identify underachievement at an early stage.
- Build on the good practice in the school to make sure that all targets are related to specific individual needs and that all pupils are fully aware of these.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. They make good progress between Year 7 and Year 11 and reach standards which are above the national average. Within this picture, however, there are variations. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are average overall, indicating satisfactory progress based on pupils' previous attainment. However, this masks the fact that pupils are making better progress in English than in mathematics or science.

Progress accelerates in Key Stage 4, where the proportion of pupils gaining five or more good GCSE grades has continued its upward trend over the last few years and is now above average. There are some particular successes such as the number of pupils achieving English GCSEs in Year 10. Performance in mathematics is less strong, as the proportion of pupils reaching higher grades in mathematics GCSE remains just below the national average.

As a result of the school's efforts to provide continuing education for as many students as possible, a substantial minority have low starting points on entry to the sixth form. They make good progress and reach average standards overall.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with particular gifts or talents make equally good progress. The school is aware that pupils in the middle ability range have not made consistently good progress in recent years, and actions have been taken to remedy this. The impact of these initiatives can be seen in lessons where most pupils are now making good progress across the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils enjoy being at the school and they develop well within a supportive Christian ethos. The school has worked hard to improve attendance, which is now above average, but punctuality is an issue with a minority of pupils. Most behave very well in lessons and around the school. They look smart and have a friendly but respectful approach. Exclusion levels are low and the school uses a range of effective strategies to motivate and engage pupils. The school's commitment to ensuring that every child feels valued is exemplified by a broad range of special programmes. The school promotes healthy living outstandingly well, due mainly to the strength of its specialist sports college status. Pupils appreciate the nutritious meals and snacks provided by the school catering service, and many speak about the positive impact this has had on what they now like to eat at home. Despite some serious accommodation issues, pupils act sensibly and safely and they feel secure. They show respect for each other and feel that bullying is dealt with effectively. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and is enriched by an innovative range of activities. The new school council is

beginning to bring about improvements for pupils. Pupils are encouraged to make a very positive contribution to the community through a broad range of charity events, sporting activities and the arts.

Suitable sex education and guidance about drugs and alcohol are provided but the programme for personal, social, health and citizenship education lacks some rigour. The school ensures that pupils understand the world of work and equips them well to become confident young men with appropriate skills and attitudes. Pupils and parents value the school and understand its mission and commitment to inclusion.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school's focus on assessment for learning is having a positive impact in lessons. Teachers are more confident and use a wide variety of teaching strategies to aid pupils' achievement. Good and outstanding teaching seen during the inspection exemplifies the school's success, although the assessment for learning approach is not yet consistent throughout the school. Strengths include strong subject knowledge and good quality questioning to promote pupils' thinking whilst enabling teachers to assess their understanding. The use of interactive whiteboards and the engagement of pupils in a range of activities are also strong features. In the best lessons, teachers present their subject with enthusiasm and humour and have high expectations of what the class can achieve. Pupils respond well to these methods, and appreciate the mutual respect which exists. As one pupil explained, to the agreement of others present, 'We like it when the teachers make the lesson fun and have a laugh with us, but we know how far we can go and always work hard'. Pupils enjoy these lessons and as a result, learning is good. Where teaching is satisfactory, opportunities are missed for pupils to be actively engaged in their learning. Marking is also variable in quality and does not always relate to individual pupils' targets by providing clear feedback on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work. As a result, some pupils who may be underachieving are not identified early enough to ensure rapid intervention and improvement.

Some good practice in marking does exist which could be more widely shared. For example, in the English, geography and history departments next steps in learning are shared well with pupils. In an art lesson, one pupil stated 'Miss showed me how to do it and it worked'; this good guidance was appreciated. More able pupils are provided with appropriate challenge so that they achieve well. Vulnerable pupils and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in lessons. This is because of the quality of support provided. Where boys are withdrawn for specific lessons, for example, they achieve particularly well. This is because everyone's contribution is valued, pupils' self-esteem is high and boys are keen to learn because they know they will succeed. This good support reflects the school's inclusive approach.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of the school's curriculum and enrichment activities is good. An outstanding feature is the exciting range of sports-related activities. In addition, there is a very good range of cultural and social events that involves all groups of pupils. Thoughtful leadership has led to the design of a highly relevant range of vocational courses at Key Stage 4. This attracts pupils of all ability levels and is a major factor in the school's improved achievement at the end of Year 11. This success is boosting pupils' personal development and encouraging them to seek further education and training. The school has plans to tackle what it recognises as a relative lack of independence on the part of some pupils during Key Stage 3, and acknowledges that arrangements for citizenship education are not fully secure. A particular strength of the school's curriculum is the collaborative partnerships which add breadth to its provision. Pupils and staff alike reported enthusiastically on the exciting three day 'Health Event' last term. This innovative programme involved no fewer than 30 external organisations and contributed enormously to pupils' personal development through a focus on Every Child Matters.

The sixth form curriculum is good. The school provides a good range of relevant courses and is committed to seeking further improvements, particularly in Year 12. Students are fully involved in a range of activities in the wider community that extend the curriculum. For example, many assist teachers in sports activities and some have achieved sports leadership awards.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school cares for its pupils well. Senior staff and pastoral teams offer high quality support. They know the pupils well and work effectively with the learning mentors and the chaplain. This ensures that vulnerable pupils, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the small number in public care are well supported. The cooperation of a range of agencies enhances the quality of support offered and innovative programmes, such as the vulnerable learners' project and the production of a CD-ROM to support revision are outstanding features. A culture of praise and encouragement builds pupils' confidence and helps to raise their aspirations. Staff promote health and safety effectively and display care and commitment to the school's mission. Assemblies are used very well to promote Christian values and to offer guidance. Pupils receive good advice when making choices at times of transition, but there is some inconsistency in the way in which their overall progress is monitored, for example, in making effective use of pupils' planners. Child protection procedures are robust and risk assessments are undertaken and reviewed. Careers advice is effective and pupils are equipped to make informed choices. The school works well with parents and communicates effectively with families and the community.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good and have particularly strong features which indicate that the school has very good capacity to improve. The leadership team works together effectively and are committed to providing the best possible education for the pupils. The headteacher, since his appointment over two and a half years ago, has worked very successfully alongside governors to remedy a significant deficit in the school's financial budget. To their credit, this has been achieved ahead of schedule through prudent management of resources, including restructuring the staff. Standards have continued to rise despite this potential barrier, and middle managers have played their part by promoting effective teamwork across subject departments despite the necessary cutbacks in additional resources. A relatively large number of staff changes in the last two years, whilst presenting some challenges, have also facilitated new opportunities and fresh impetus for change.

Some specific areas for improvement identified by the last inspection remain, for example, achievement in mathematics and in the marking of pupils' work. However, the quality and range of the school's curriculum has improved; overall standards at the end of Key Stage 4 have continued to rise; and the sports college specialism has had a very positive impact on provision, achievement and personal development. The rate of improvement has gathered pace recently now that finance and staffing issues have been successfully managed and there is a rigorous and whole-school approach to raising the quality of teaching and achievement still further.

The role of middle managers is appropriately focused on raising standards through monitoring and evaluation and most carry out those responsibilities effectively. Recent improvements to the way in which managers collect and interpret data on pupils' attainment have contributed well to honest and accurate self-evaluation. As a result, the school leadership has a clear view of its strengths and areas for development and is taking appropriate action to remedy weaknesses. However, some of these actions are at an early stage so that the school is not yet reaching challenging targets at Key Stage 3. Not all managers are using assessment data sharply enough to ensure rapid support or challenge for pupils who may be underachieving.

Management of the school's work as a specialist college is of high quality. There has been a positive impact on teaching and learning styles that has supported improved progress. The greatest development has been in the additional opportunities provided for pupils, particularly through the school's work in the community.

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Inspection judgements

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| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | School Overall | 16-19 |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

Overall effectiveness

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 | 2 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 1 | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 | 2 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes | Yes |

Achievement and standards

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 2 | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 2 | 2 |

Personal development and well-being

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 | 1 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 1 | 1 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 | 2 |

The quality of provision

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 2 | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 | 2 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 | 2 |

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2 | 2 |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets | 3 | 3 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 2 | 2 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 | 2 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 | 2 |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures? | No | |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | No | |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you are aware, inspectors recently spent two days in your school, observing lessons and talking to pupils, students and staff about their work.

We decided that Cardinal Heenan is a good school which is well led and has some outstanding features. We were particularly impressed by the excellent contribution that the sports college makes to your education in general, but especially how it has helped most of you to be determined to lead healthy lives. We heard how much you enjoyed the three day Health Event last term, the sporting activities you take part in, and were pleased to hear that some students even earn sports leadership awards.

The school really makes the most of its partnerships with other schools and organisations. This helps you to achieve the best you can, not just academically, but also as responsible young people who understand their community and are well prepared for the world of work. You make good progress in most lessons because of the good curriculum and teaching which keeps you thinking and working hard. We know you like some lessons better than others, especially when the teaching is lively and interesting.

To make further improvements, the inspectors have suggested the following:

- progress made in Key Stage 3 could be better, especially in mathematics and science
- managers and teachers could use assessment data and marking better to quickly find out if any of you are not doing as well as you could
- each of you needs to be aware of exactly how well you are doing, what your challenging targets are and what you have to do to achieve them.

We were pleased to see most of you behaving very well around school and having such positive attitudes to your learning. Take care to make sure you arrive punctually at the start of each lesson as this can make such a difference. We know it must be difficult to take

pride in the school building when there are so many problems with it and you're looking forward to having a new one, but remember that what really matters is how well you make the most of the good education and care the school is providing for you now, and how you can play your part in making it even better.