

Cardinal Langley Roman Catholic High School, Rochdale

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105844
Local Authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	287348
Inspection date	20 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Aelwyn Pugh HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1230
6th form	154
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	
Headteacher	Mr C.A. Mason
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2001
School address	Rochdale Road Middleton Manchester Greater Manchester M24 2GL
Telephone number	0161 6434009
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Cardinal Langley Roman Catholic High School is a larger than average voluntary aided specialist sports college. Most pupils are White British with English as their first language. The proportion eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The rates of attendance are average. Pupils starting at the school tend to be of below average ability. All year groups are oversubscribed and sixth form numbers are rising.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Cardinal Langley Roman Catholic High School is a good school with some outstanding features. Foremost amongst these are the behaviour and positive attitudes of pupils and their ability to relate well to their peers and adults. Considerable efforts have been made to create a safe and welcoming environment in which to live and work. Murals created by staff and pupils together and high quality displays of art work, poetry and other achievements in halls, corridors and public spaces are a distinctive feature of the school. They reflect and contribute to its positive ethos.

The school draws most of its pupils from four local Catholic primary schools, although about a fifth come from further afield. There is a small number of pupils with severe and complex physical and educational needs. The buildings have been remodelled to give them complete access to all areas of the school. The attainment on entry covers a broad span and can vary considerably from year-to-year. The school's records show that, in general, attainment on entry is below average with standards in writing being low. By focusing specifically on particular groups of underperforming pupils, the school has been successful in bringing about considerable improvement in their performance. Therefore, overall standards at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are in line with national averages indicating pupils make good progress. However, as the school has recognised, this masks considerable variation between subjects. Within the core subjects, for example, science has a strong record whilst results in English and mathematics have been more variable.

The headteacher has rightly made the need to raise standards and minimise subject differences the focus of his agenda for improvement and has restructured and extended the senior leadership team to support this work. The appointment of academic performance managers and the introduction of a rigorous programme of regular classroom observations are already beginning to have a positive impact on teaching. However, evidence provided by the school indicates that there is still too much variation between departments in terms of management and the quality of teaching and learning.

Over the last three years, the school has made good use of its specialist sports college status to enhance provision. The curriculum has been extended to include Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) and diploma courses in sports and physical education (PE) and effective collaborative arrangements have been established with neighbouring schools, including a successful programme to support transition from primary to secondary school. Together with initiatives such as 'lifestyle management', these developments make a major contribution to ensuring that pupils develop a safe and healthy lifestyle. Through sports leadership courses, enterprise and fundraising activities, pupils also have good opportunities to contribute to the school and wider community and to develop their economic awareness. As the school recognises, this needs to be supported by further improvements in the provision of information and communication technology (ICT) at Key Stage 4.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Provision in the sixth form is good. Performance has improved over the past two years and standards have risen to above average. This is due in part to rigorous guidance for students in selecting appropriate courses and also to the good quality of teaching and learning which leads

to good progress. Particularly good performance in business studies is being used as a model to help bring about improvements in other subjects. Students are proud of their contribution to the main school and readily take on a range of responsibilities. The 'Genesis' group provides both academic support and a 'listening ear' to any problems pupils might have. Excellent provision for students' personal development and well-being contributes to the development of responsible young citizens who take an active role in their community. There are effective safeguarding procedures in place for sixth formers, including clear signing out procedures when they are off site. Good progress is being made in extending the curriculum to provide a broader range of courses more closely matched to students' needs. These reforms are planned to be fully operational by September 2008. Students are provided with good enrichment opportunities through a wide range of well attended sporting and cultural activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards particularly in English and mathematics.
- Ensure consistency in standards of teaching across the school.
- Improve provision in ICT for pupils in Key Stage 4.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The attainment of pupils entering the school is below average and standards in writing are low. During their time at the school they make good progress.

At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in the core subjects has been broadly average for the last three years. In 2006, standards in science were above the national average. In mathematics they were in line with the national average and in English they were just below.

At the end of Key Stage 4, standards have been in line with the national average for the last two years. In 2005, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades was slightly above the national average. In 2006 this fell to in line with the national average. However, the proportion gaining five or more A* to C including mathematics and English was significantly below the national average in 2006, having previously been in line with that average. There are considerable variations in performance between subjects. Performance in business studies, ICT and textiles has been consistently good over the last three years.

Until recently, the performance of boys has been significantly lower than that of girls at both key stages. However, the gap has narrowed considerably so that there is now no significant difference between boys' and girls' performance.

Overall, standards in the sixth form are above average. Some subjects outperform others, with business studies being a particular strength. Hitherto the number entered for vocational subjects has been considerably lower than for traditional non-vocational subjects. However, through partnership with other schools, a better balance is being achieved. Progress of sixth form pupils in relation to their starting points is good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Provision of the personal development and well-being of the pupils is outstanding. This is largely because of the school's strong emphasis on valuing each pupil. Behaviour is excellent and pupils show a high level of respect and tolerance for their teachers and each other. The school is rightly proud of its success in improving pupils' self-esteem. Pupils feel safe in school and their parents echo this in their very positive responses in the inspection questionnaires. Pupils readily take on a wide variety of responsibilities and relish the opportunities to talk to adults and become involved in improving their school. They are very well prepared for the future through the excellent links with local businesses and the highly regarded 'Enterprise Day'. Because of concerted efforts on the part of the school, attendance has improved and is now average. Clear targets have been set to improve this further through close collaboration with outside agencies. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This is the bedrock of the school's character and the pupils are excellent ambassadors for the values which it represents. The impact of the sports college status has considerably increased pupils' involvement in sport and fitness.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school's own analysis indicates that the standards of teaching and learning are good. This is confirmed by the sampling undertaken during this inspection.

The best lessons were delivered at a good pace, with time and resources being used efficiently and effectively. Work was well matched to the varying abilities of pupils and there was a good balance between teacher-directed and pupil-instigated activities. The teachers had good subject knowledge and made effective use of focused questioning to encourage and challenge their pupils to clarify and develop their ideas. Standards of behaviour were high and pupils worked with concentration and enthusiasm, drawing effectively on their previous knowledge and experiences.

Where teaching was less effective, the lessons lacked pace and the work was insufficiently demanding, particularly for the more able pupils. There were comparatively few opportunities for pupils to develop independence. Marking did not give them a sufficiently clear idea of how they might improve their work and make greater progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good and enriched by a wide range of after-school activities, particularly in sport. Residential visits, both in this country and abroad, enrich their experiences further. Sports college status is having an increasing impact across subjects. For example, the use of PE as a stimulus for problem-solving has enabled Year 11 pupils who were in danger of underperforming

to improve their attainment to grade C and above. The introduction of BTEC courses in PE has broadened the curriculum and contributed to rising standards. The increasing availability of vocational pathways for older pupils means that the curriculum is now becoming more closely matched to the needs of all pupils. The provision for ICT is improving but does not yet meet pupils' needs consistently in Key Stage 4.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils are cared for, guided and supported well by the school. This is having a positive impact on their personal development and resulting in improved social skills and increased self-confidence. Recent improvements in the school's assessment procedures mean that most pupils have a clear understanding of what standards they are attaining and what they need to do to progress further. Pupils are also more involved in assessing each other's work and setting their own targets. This is particularly the case in science. The school has appropriate arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils and follows health and safety advice. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given good support through a thoughtful programme of targeted help. The clear identification of their needs is enabling them to make good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good with good capacity to improve provision further.

The headteacher has a clear vision of the direction in which he wishes to take the school. He has been systematic in implementing strategies to achieve his aims, taking care to balance innovation with continuity. Through the recent restructuring of the senior leadership team, he has succeeded in drawing together colleagues with a wide range of complementary skills and focusing their efforts very clearly on the need to raise standards. They, in turn, have risen to the challenge with determination and enthusiasm. Their work in monitoring teaching is having a clear impact in terms of bringing about improvements. However, there is still further work to be done to ensure consistency in the quality of middle management. The quality of the school's self-evaluation is good.

The governors are very dedicated to, and supportive of, the staff and pupils. They have been instrumental in ensuring that innovations such as changes to the school day have wide support from parents and the wider community. The school improvement committee is closely involved in the monitoring of progress in relation to the school improvement plan. However, issues relating to standards are not sufficiently central to the work of the overall governing body.

Resources are used effectively and in a focused way to support the school's aims. Finance generated by the school's specialist status has been used very effectively to enhance provision, as has the increasing collaboration with neighbouring schools on a range of projects. The buildings have been carefully remodelled to ensure full access to pupils with multiple disabilities and staff are deployed thoughtfully and sensitively to match pupils' needs.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	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.

Annex A

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	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
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

Inspection of Cardinal Langley Roman Catholic High School, Manchester, M24 2GL

Many thanks to you all for the welcome and help you gave Mrs Cordey and myself when we inspected your school recently. We are particularly grateful to those of you who kindly gave up your time to talk to us during lessons and around the school, especially the members of the school council and the 'Genesis' group who met with us at lunchtime.

We think that Cardinal Langley is a good school which is likely to become even better because of the way that it is being run by the headteacher and his staff and because of the way that you approach school life. We were particularly impressed by your behaviour, your very positive attitudes and the way that you respect each other, your teachers and visitors to the school. You and your teachers have created a school which is safe and welcoming and a place of which you are clearly proud. It was good to see so many examples of your art work, poetry and other achievements on display. I am sorry that we were not able to see 'Little Shop of Horrors' but I am sure it went well.

We found that, during your time at the school, most of you make good progress but you could still aim higher and produce even better results. At the moment, the progress which you make varies too much between subjects. Overall, the standards of teaching and learning at your school are good and you are given good advice on which courses to follow, how well you are doing and how you could improve your work further. You have the opportunity to study a good range of courses, including an increasing range of work-related activities but, at the moment, the ICT offered to older students is rather too limited. You have a particularly good range of opportunities to take part in sport and PE which helps ensure that you are fit and healthy. Through enterprise activities, your fundraising and the sports leadership programmes you are also making a very valuable contribution to the school and the wider community and being prepared well for adult life.

We have asked the headteacher and staff to focus on improving standards further, to make sure that teaching and learning are equally good across all subjects and to make more ICT available to older students. You can help by continuing to work hard and always having faith in your own ability to give of your best.

We wish you all every success in the future.