

Cardinal Pole Roman Catholic School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100285
Local Authority	Hackney
Inspection number	307350
Inspection dates	9–10 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Alison Thomson

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	988
6th form	106
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Christopher Grace
Headteacher	Ms Katherine Hartigan
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2001
School address	Kenworthy Road Homerton London E9 5RB
Telephone number	020 8985 5150
Fax number	020 8533 7325

Age group	11-19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Cardinal Pole is a comprehensive school of average size but with a lower than average number of girls. The students come from a wide range of backgrounds, reflecting the cultural diversity of the area served by the school. The school is in a disadvantaged area and the percentage of students eligible for free school means is much higher than the national average. The percentage of students with learning difficulties/and or disabilities is average. The school has science specialist status. The school is on two sites about one mile apart. The new Sixth Form Centre was opened in October 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Cardinal Pole is a good and improving school. Behaviour, teaching, and learning are good, and consequently standards have risen. Students make good progress in the main school and satisfactory progress in the sixth form. Students' achievement is good from their relatively low starting point and standards are broadly average. The headteacher and her senior staff are a highly effective team and they have been instrumental in bringing about the many improvements that have led to the sustained rise in achievement. They have clearly identified what needs to improve and how this will be done, and have secured the commitment of staff to make the changes being asked of them. Middle leaders are increasingly being empowered to monitor and evaluate the work of their departments or year teams.

A real strength of the school is its happy, caring ethos and emphasis on nurturing positive relationships. Students talk warmly about the 'caring atmosphere' in the school and the way they find all the staff very approachable. Parents are also largely positive about the school a comment, typical of their views was, 'Cardinal Pole is a good school which enables and empowers the child to reach their potential'. Students attend regularly and very much enjoy learning. They appreciate the rich opportunities for out-of-hours activities and the wide range of visits. Their understanding of healthy living is good and participation in physical activities is high. Students take responsibilities seriously and provide good service in the community. For example, they have been fully involved in raising money and awareness through the Anthony Nolan Trust to provide support for a fellow pupil to help aid her recovery. The school supports students well, ensures they are safe, and prepares them successfully for the next stage of education or training. Vulnerable students are especially well supported. Y11 students are given good guidance for entry to the sixth form.

Teaching is good in the main school and there is now a greater focus on improving learning. However, in some lessons all students are given the same work to do despite their different capabilities. Consequently some work is too easy for the most able students and their achievement is not as high as it could be. The curriculum is good, offering a good choice of academic and vocational courses. Students are set challenging targets. Most students know their targets and how well they are working towards achieving them. However, there is inconsistency in the guidance given to students and some are not clear about the next steps they need to take in their learning. Teaching is satisfactory in the sixth form. However, students are not given enough opportunities to be involved in their own learning and to develop their own ideas. Consequently some students are not achieving as highly they might do. The school is taking steps to monitor teaching and learning more rigorously in the sixth form, but it is too early to see evidence of improvements.

The school has used its science specialist status well to improve standards, to provide a context for other school developments and to enhance links with other schools. Its challenging specialist status targets have been met at GCSE. This is a school that knows itself well and one that is challenged rigorously by a good active governing body. Many improvements have been seen since the previous inspection and this indicates that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Students are positive about their experience in the sixth form. They talk of its 'togetherness' and value the way they are 'treated as individuals'. Students enter the sixth form with broadly average standards. They make satisfactory progress and most reach average standards by the end of Year 13. Standards have improved over the past three years. The curriculum is now good, meeting the needs of the students well and retention rates are high and improving. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and there are good relationships between teachers and students. However, most teaching does not have a high enough emphasis on empowering the students to work independently and be fully involved in their own learning. Leadership and management are good. The new head of the sixth form has already put in place initiatives that are beginning to have an impact. For example, there are increasingly effective tracking and monitoring systems for identifying students who are underachieving and appropriate support systems are now in place. Students feel well supported and that their views are valued. For example, they say they were instrumental in widening the curriculum to include subjects such as psychology. The personal development of the students is good. They are fully involved in the life of the school and welcome the opportunity to support younger students both pastorally and academically.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in the sixth form by giving students more opportunities to be involved in their own learning and to develop their own ideas.
- Increase the level of challenge in lessons for the higher attaining students in order to raise their achievement.
- Ensure consistency in the guidance given to students so they know more clearly the next steps in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students enter school in Year 7 with levels of attainment that are below average. They make good progress in Key Stage 3, reaching broadly average standards by the end of Year 9. Standards have improved over the past two years with the biggest improvements seen in English. Progress in Years 10 and 11 is good with English particularly strong. Year on year there has been a sustained improvement in standards at the end of Year 11. These standards are securely in line with national averages on a number of indicators, including the proportion of students gaining five higher grade (A* to C) passes, including English and mathematics. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities also make good progress throughout the school. An individualised monitoring and tracking system identifies underperforming students and intervention strategies have been instrumental in raising attainment. However, the school acknowledges that, throughout the school, the improvement in the attainment of the most able students has not been as rapid as that seen in other groups and they are not achieving as well as they might. The school has met its challenging specialist status targets at GCSE.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. Students respond well to the school's restorative approach in dealing with behaviour issues and instances of bullying are rare. Many positive strategies have resulted in the students' attendance and behaviour being good. Students feel safe and enjoy a calm learning environment, confident that teachers will address any concerns promptly and deal fairly and sensitively with them. They develop a strong commitment to racial equality and have a good understanding of diversity and citizenship through the school's promotion of religious values and opportunities. Students are proud to contribute to the improvement of the school community and have a good level of confidence. However, opportunities for the development of their leadership are limited and the newly formed school council has not yet had a high profile. Students show a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and the take up of sporting activities is high. Preparation for their economic well-being is good and they develop good skills in literacy and sound skills in numeracy and in information and communications technology (ICT) and teamwork.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students have good relationships with their teachers and are keen to learn. As a result, students' progress has been improving over the past few years. Teachers and learning support staff are particularly careful to help students with learning difficulties so that they make good progress. Emphasis on the language of the subject helps students to understand ideas while improving their literacy. Teachers' questioning is skilful, guiding and encouraging students to think ideas through for themselves. Lessons are well-planned to build on and reinforce previous learning. Nevertheless, the highest attaining students are underachieving and are not always sufficiently challenged. Staff are working to address this. Relationships in classrooms are good, contributing to good learning. Students respond well to the consistent application of the school's behaviour management practices. While it is regular practice for teachers to discuss issues with students relating to their work, the quality of marking is not consistent.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum has developing strengths in the way it is matched to the needs of different students. Those who wish to follow an academic route have a good selection of options. The range of vocational courses is expanding and is providing an increasingly popular route into sixth form or college. Literacy, drama and ICT are being used increasingly to support learning in other subjects. Citizenship is addressed well and there are good outcomes in terms of pupil attitudes, behaviour and political knowledge. The school makes good use of its proximity to business and financial institutions to improve work-related learning. For example, students have business mentors whose support they value. The school's specialist science status has

enabled the provision in science to be enhanced and it is having a positive impact on the popularity of science in the sixth form. There is an excellent range of visits across subjects and year groups. For example, the library organises events and visits that improve the popularity and standard of reading for students of all abilities. A high proportion of students learn to play musical instruments. They enjoy sporting activities and performing arts clubs. Subject clubs help students to complete coursework and revise for examinations.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Parents have rightly identified the caring culture in the school as a strength. Staff, from form tutors to senior managers, provide good care and support to students in various circumstances, for example, when they join the school or when they experience difficulties in their learning. Students acknowledge and praise the quality of relationships established by the staff, and the effect this has on their feelings of well-being. This is enhanced further through a recently introduced programme which aims to promote healthy emotional development. The senior managers are consulting with parents and have strengthened the arrangements for partnership and support. Safeguarding of students is robust and health and safety is carefully managed. There are effective systems to ensure that all groups of learners are fully supported and integrated. Students are generally well informed of their progress and they are aware of their attainment. However, there is inconsistency in the quality of guidance given to students to show them exactly how to improve their work. There is a good careers education and guidance programme. The majority of Key Stage 4 students choose to stay in the sixth form.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership successfully focuses the attention of all members of the school community on ensuring students achieve well both in their academic and personal development. Strong teamwork and communications are central to this success. An effective system of self-evaluation, which involves leaders at all levels, ensures that clear and accurate areas for improvement are identified, challenging targets set and action taken to implement these. For instance, the focus on creating an 'upbeat' atmosphere where students behave well and are interested in their learning has helped towards improving achievement. The sharing of responsibilities, with an emphasis on learning, with leaders at all levels helps with the early identification of issues and allocation of resources to remedy them. This is shown in the rapid progress made by weaker readers in Year 7. The system in place to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning is effective in highlighting areas for improvement such, as marking. However, the school recognises that middle leaders should have a more consistent approach when evaluating the work of their departments. Governors carry out their role effectively, especially in setting values for the school and in very rigorous challenging of senior staff. The leadership of the headteacher and recent appointments at senior level have been crucial in helping move the school forward. The school is well supported by its parents and is popular with prospective parents. Outside agencies are used effectively to provide support.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
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?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
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	3
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	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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	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

23 January 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Cardinal Pole Roman Catholic School, London, E9 5RB

Thank you for way you welcomed us into your school. We enjoyed our visit and valued the opportunity to talk with you in discussion groups, in lessons and as we met you around the school. It was clear that you enjoy school and we found that Cardinal Pole provides you with a good standard of education. You have a good range of subjects and excellent opportunities to enhance your education with many interesting visits. You have good relationships with your teachers and you value the care you receive from them. Your personal development is good and you welcome the opportunities to help others in the community, both in and out of school. Standards of work in school have improved and are now in line with other schools nationally.

To help the school to improve further, we have asked the governors, the headteacher and the staff to:

- Raise achievement in the sixth form by giving students more opportunities to be involved in their own learning and to develop their own ideas.
- Improve the level of challenge in lessons for the higher attaining students in order to raise their achievement.
- Ensure consistency in the guidance given to students so they know more clearly the next steps in their learning.

Your headteacher and teachers are committed to raising standards. You can help by asking for more difficult work if you find it too easy and working more closely with your teachers so you know how to improve your work. You cooperate well with what your school is trying to do for you and we are convinced that you will continue to support your teachers and respond actively to their attempts to help you make even faster progress.

With good wishes for the future

Alison Thomson

Lead Inspector