

Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School and Language College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103744
Local Authority	Coventry
Inspection number	308409
Inspection dates	30–31 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Dilip Kadodwala HMI

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1180
6th form	199
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pat Gardner
Headteacher	Helen Knight
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2004
School address	Potters Green Road Coventry CV2 2AJ
Telephone number	024 76617231
Fax number	024 76602572

Age group	11–18
Inspection dates	30–31 January 2008
Inspection number	308409

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors. A section 48 inspection took place at the same time as this section 5 inspection.

Description of the school

This is a larger-than-average school. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. A small minority are from a range of ethnic backgrounds. About 9% of the pupils are at an early stage of speaking English. The school serves some areas of social and economic disadvantage and a greater-than-average proportion of its pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, although the proportion who have a statement of special educational need is below average. The school has had specialist status in language with a rural dimension since September 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Cardinal Wiseman is an inclusive school. Its overall effectiveness, including that of the sixth form, is satisfactory. A parent's response to the inspection questionnaire reflects the view of many: 'I feel my son is receiving a varied and interesting education, but is also gaining in confidence because of the ethos of the school'. Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils make a positive contribution to their school and the wider community, particularly through the work of the school council. The majority of pupils attend regularly and their behaviour is satisfactory. Fixed-term exclusion rates have reduced significantly. Staff show commitment to pupils' welfare, so that pupils receive sound care and support. Pupils are encouraged to live healthily and most do so, for example, through participation in sports activities. The specialist status contributes well to developing pupils' cultural and social development. It also makes a significant contribution to the achievements in modern foreign languages and the school's curricular provision, which is satisfactory with good elements.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Relationships are good and teachers encourage pupils to achieve their best. Learning is most successful when lessons proceed at a brisk pace and teachers use challenging questions to test and extend pupils' understanding. Teachers' access to effective training and the sharing of good practice has improved the quality of teaching. However, the proportion of good or better teaching is not high enough to ensure that pupils make good progress, and inconsistencies in teachers' marking mean that pupils are not always given enough guidance on how to improve their work.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership of the headteacher is good, and the two deputy headteachers ably support her. Senior leaders give a clear direction to the school and self-evaluation is comprehensive and accurate, with well-focused priorities for improvement. A positive impact is seen in the rise of five good passes at GCSE, improving at a rate which is better than that found nationally. Improvements in a number of management functions have taken place so that leaders at the middle management level are increasingly playing a key role in monitoring pupils' performance and improving the quality of teaching. The impact has yet to be fully seen, but both teachers' and pupils' expectations have already been raised. Governors provide a good balance of support and challenge and play an active part in providing strategic direction to the school.

Recent test and examination results have been below average, in part because of insufficient monitoring of pupils' progress. However, senior leaders are taking robust action to tackle this weakness, with clear signs of improvement. Achievement is satisfactory now because senior leaders have set challenging targets to raise standards and they have put effective systems in place to monitor pupils' performance. Teachers know which pupils are falling behind and they take effective action to ensure pupils catch up. However, attainment at the end of Year 9 remains below average in English, mathematics and science. The percentage of five good passes at GCSE is rising, but not when good passes including English and mathematics are taken into consideration. Although there has been year-on-year improvement in English and Mathematics GCSE results, the overall rate of improvement is not fast enough. Progress on improving the issues identified in the last inspection has been good. This indicates that capacity for further improvement is good.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The sixth form provides a satisfactory standard of education for its students. Standards attained are broadly average and students make satisfactory progress in most subjects. Students make particularly good progress in A-level mathematics. The rural dimension of the school's specialism is very well served through a course in animal care leading to a BTEC qualification. The teaching of this course is outstanding. Leadership and management are satisfactory, as is the capacity to improve. There is a vacancy for the head of sixth form that is temporarily managed by members of the senior leadership team. They analyse data well so that strengths and weaknesses are readily identified. Students' personal development is satisfactory. There are opportunities for them to take responsibilities and contribute to school life. A small group effectively supports the lay chaplain in her work with younger pupils. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, although some students make good progress because their teachers are well prepared and have a good knowledge of their subject. Some students have difficulty recalling their previous knowledge and this hinders their progress. Students are given sensible guidance in choosing subjects at the end of Year 11 and Year 12, resulting in only a small minority dropping out of courses. A much-improved tracking system closely monitors students' progress so that teachers can keep them on track to achieve their targets. A strength of the sixth form is its good, broad curriculum as it meets the needs of students well. Choice of courses is also widened through partnerships with other schools and colleges. This arrangement is managed effectively.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 9 and increase the proportion of pupils who attain five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics.
- Increase the proportion of teaching that is good or better.
- Ensure that there is greater consistency in the marking of pupils' work so that they know how to improve.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Pupils start at the school with slightly-below-average levels of attainment. In 2007, results in national tests at the end of Year 9 were below average in English, mathematics and science. Although GCSE results were below average by the end of Year 11, standards have improved over recent years. Standards are rising because inadequacies in tracking pupils' performance have been rectified. The progress made by pupils throughout the school is now satisfactory. Targets for the current Year 9 and 11 pupils are challenging and, if met, should see a continuation of improvement. The needs of those pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are met well and their progress overall is satisfactory, with some making good progress. Pupils who are at an early stage of speaking English receive good support so that their progress is at least satisfactory. Good progress is made by the small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The majority of pupils enjoy school. Attendance is satisfactory at just below the national figure. The overall attendance rate is rising because the strategies used to encourage and reward good attendance are working for most pupils. However, the impact is not as positive on a small number of pupils, particularly in Year 11. Most pupils behave sensibly in lessons. A small number of parents have raised concerns about pupils' behaviour. Exclusions for disruptive behaviour have been high, but the establishment of the isolation room has significantly reduced both exclusions and the incidence of poor behaviour.

Through the school council, pupils express their views and raise concerns. They feel that their opinions are listened to and take credit for improvements which have resulted from their discussions. Pupils develop a good sense of right and wrong. They have satisfactory opportunities to develop their spiritual and cultural development in lessons such as in English, art and geography. Pupils have a broadly good understanding of cultural diversity in Britain and that found more globally. The language specialism makes an important contribution in this respect. The rural dimension of the specialism also contributes well to pupils' spiritual development.

Pupils readily get involved in working with pupils in link primary schools and participating in farming and animal care activities offered at school. Pupils say they feel safe and they act safely in and around school. A few pupils and parents, however, report some bullying. The school deals with this suitably and quickly. Pupils are aware of how to live healthily and many take part in sports outside lesson time. They understand the need to eat healthily, choosing sensibly from the school lunch menu. Some, however, continue to bring less healthy foods from home. Pupils develop satisfactorily skills that will be of use to them in adult life, but their understanding of financial issues is underdeveloped.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Typically, lessons proceed in a calm and purposeful atmosphere, where pupils behave satisfactorily and are attentive. Work is usually matched to pupils' capabilities. However, teachers rarely provide more complex resources or activities for the most able in mixed teaching groups. The best lessons encompass a variety of ways of learning. In these lessons, pupils are clear about what they will be learning and are involved in evaluating how they will learn and whether they have been successful. Teachers involve pupils actively in discussion work. Assessment, including self- and peer-assessment, is used effectively to check pupils' progress. Teachers provide detailed comments on written work which help pupils to know at what standard they are working and to see clearly how they can improve further. When teaching is less effective, teachers do not always make it clear enough what they expect pupils to learn. They do not ensure that all pupils take an active part in lessons by, for example, targeting questions at specific pupils. Marking is variable in quality. There is some good practice, such as that in English and modern foreign languages. However many comments, across a range of subjects, are too vague to be helpful.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school's specialist status enriches the curriculum. All pupils study at least one modern foreign language. Outreach work at feeder primary schools, which combines aspects of the school farm and languages, helps to ensure a smooth transition to secondary school. An initiative to develop Year 7 pupils' thinking and learning skills serves them well. In Years 10 and 11, the needs of pupils are met well through three alternative pathways which match individuals to appropriate programmes of study. Provision for literacy across the main school is satisfactory, with targeted interventions in Year 7. Numeracy provision, although generally satisfactory, is underdeveloped. The appointment of a new coordinator is aiming to accelerate improvement. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress overall because of the provision made for them. All pupils participate successfully in work experience during Year 10 and the school makes reasonable provision for work-related learning. There are many opportunities for extra-curricular activities, but while approximately 30% of pupils participate, transport arrangements restrict greater participation.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Established systems and routines that ensure sound care and support mean that pupils settle into school life quickly, especially in Year 7. Pupils receive satisfactory guidance and support when they make choices for options in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Pupils also receive suitable careers guidance. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils and securing their health and safety are fully in place. Pupils, including the most vulnerable, know who to turn to if they need help and support. Staged intervention programmes to support pupils experiencing behavioural difficulties are mostly successful. There is effective monitoring of the welfare and academic progress of children who are looked after and those who speak English as an additional language. While there are examples of at least satisfactory practice in some areas of the school, inconsistencies in marking and assessment prevent pupils from making better progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The headteacher provides unwavering good leadership, enabling pupils and staff to do their best. Senior staff share and support the headteacher's and governors' vision for school improvement. A key driver is the rigorous use of a tracking system which monitors pupils' progress. Faculty and subject leaders are increasingly adept at identifying underachievement and taking suitable action, supported by pastoral leaders with responsibility for monitoring pupils' progress. However, much remains to be done to raise standards higher and to sustain the improvements secured in pupils' progress. Monitoring is regular and rigorous and focused on the right areas of the school's work. Some inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching. The school's self-evaluation has accurately identified these inconsistencies, as well as the right priorities and action for improvement. A broad range of views, including those expressed by

parents and pupils, informs self-evaluation. Since the last inspection, progress has been made in resolving the identified weaknesses in governance. Careful use is made of resources and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	3	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?	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	3

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

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?	3	3
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
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

1 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School and Language College, Coventry, CV2 2AJ

Many thanks for helping us with the inspection of your school. We were impressed with your warm welcome. We enjoyed talking with you and the things you shared with us helped us to carry out our job easily.

We judged that your school is satisfactory. Although standards attained by the end of Year 9 and 11 are below average, you make satisfactory progress. This is mainly because the senior leaders of the school, especially the headteacher, are providing the drive to ensure that there is a good system in place to monitor your progress and take effective action when your performance drops to below expected levels. We judged that the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Senior leaders are also ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning improves, particularly in those subjects where standards are below average. You value opportunities to take part in peer- and self-assessment, but we found that the quality of teachers' marking is not consistent across all subjects.

We judged that your personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Staff are committed to your welfare and do their best to encourage you to be healthy and stay safe. You play your part by most of you attending regularly and behaving well in lessons and around the school. You also make the most of the opportunities to participate in sports activities, which many of you said you enjoy very much. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum which has good elements. The school's specialist language status is especially positive because it enables you all to learn at least one modern foreign language. The rural dimension of the status enables you to understand the importance of the environment, including looking after the animals on the school farm. Some of you spoke highly of the St Francis garden and we agree that it provides a tranquil retreat. To help the school become even better we have asked the senior leaders to raise standards further in English, mathematics and science, including at GCSE level; to improve teaching so that more of it is good or better; and to make sure that teachers' marking shows you how to improve in all areas of your work. You can help by acting on teachers' guidance. A small minority of you could also improve your attendance rate, so that your progress speeds up.

With all best wishes for your future.

Dilip Kadodwala Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex B

1 February 2008

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School and Language College,
Coventry, CV2 2AJ**

Many thanks for helping us with the inspection of your school. We were impressed with your warm welcome. We enjoyed talking with you and the things you shared with us helped us to carry out our job easily.

We judged that your school is satisfactory. Although standards attained by the end of Year 9 and 11 are below average, you make satisfactory progress. This is mainly because the senior leaders of the school, especially the headteacher, are providing the drive to ensure that there is a good system in place to monitor your progress and take effective action when your performance drops to below expected levels. We judged that the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Senior leaders are also ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning improves, particularly in those subjects where standards are below average. You value opportunities to take part in peer- and self-assessment, but we found that the quality of teachers' marking is not consistent across all subjects.

We judged that your personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Staff are committed to your welfare and do their best to encourage you to be healthy and stay safe. You play your part by most of you attending regularly and behaving well in lessons and around the school. You also make the most of the opportunities to participate in sports activities, which many of you said you enjoy very much. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum which has good elements. The school's specialist language status is especially positive because it enables you all to learn at least one modern foreign language. The rural dimension of the status enables you to understand the importance of the environment, including looking after the animals on the school farm. Some of you spoke highly of the St Francis garden and we agree that it provides a tranquil retreat. To help the school become even better we have asked the senior leaders to raise standards further in English, mathematics and science, including at GCSE level; to improve teaching so that more of it is good or better; and to make sure that teachers' marking shows you how to improve in all areas of your work. You can help by acting on teachers' guidance. A small minority of you could also improve your attendance rate, so that your progress speeds up.

With all best wishes for your future.

Dilip Kadodwala
Her Majesty's Inspector