

Cardinal Newman Catholic School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114611
Local Authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	311660
Inspection date	7 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Stephen Long 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	1707
6th form	387
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tad Matus
Headteacher	P Evans
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2004
School address	The Upper Drive Hove BN3 6ND
Telephone number	01273 558551
Fax number	01273 508778

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, who evaluated the school's overall effectiveness and investigated achievement and standards in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, aspects of teaching and learning, and the leadership and management of the sixth form. Other areas of the school's work were not investigated in detail but inspectors found no evidence that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Cardinal Newman is a large, popular school whose students come from a wide area. About three quarters are Roman Catholic, with the remainder from other Christian backgrounds. The student population is very stable, with few students leaving other than on completion of their studies. The school has had specialist status for humanities for two years and an International School award. A higher-than-average proportion of students are from minority ethnic groups and speak languages other than English, although most are fluent in English. A smaller-than-average proportion of students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Cardinal Newman is an outstanding school in which all students are valued and included. It provides a very well-ordered learning environment within which students reach very high levels of personal development and academic attainment. They have access to an excellent curriculum, are taught well and are very well cared for. The previous inspection found no significant areas for development. However, effective teamwork, skilfully fostered by the headteacher, has led to strong progress and provides evidence of the school's outstanding capacity to improve further. Parents and carers are resoundingly supportive of the school, especially appreciating the care provided for their children. As one parent wrote: 'Moral leadership and guidance for the youngsters is very helpful and as I would advise them myself.'

Students' attainment on entry is average; they make outstanding overall progress and lay excellent foundations for their future education or employment. Between Years 7 and 9, progress is good in mathematics, science and English. Although there have been fluctuations in the results of national assessment tests in recent years, standards are above those expected. Standards in other subject areas, including information and communication technology (ICT), are well above average and represent strong overall achievement. Average- and higher-attaining students make good and sometimes outstanding progress. Lower-attaining students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, while making good overall progress, do less well than their peers because teaching is not consistently tailored to meet their needs. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is more consistently effective in moving all students forward. As a result, the standards reached by Year 11, which have been consistently above average, have seen further rises in the last two years and are now exceptionally high. Challenging targets, such as for the proportion of students gaining at least five A* to C GCSE grades, have been exceeded and within this group a very high proportion included mathematics and English. Good progress has been made towards meeting targets associated with the school's specialist status. The school does very well in ensuring the vast majority of students complete Year 11 with accredited qualifications, whether GCSE, vocational or both.

A key factor in students' excellent academic achievement is the great strength in their personal development and well-being. Their mature and responsible attitudes also prepare them very well for the next stage in their lives. The overwhelming majority of students behave exceptionally well, are courteous and proud of their school. They contribute strongly to its positive atmosphere, evident in the excellent relationships with each other and with their teachers. Students thoroughly enjoy learning, attend well and many, when given the choice, opt to stay on in the sixth form. They feel very secure; they trust the staff and know who to go to with concerns. There are very few behavioural issues but students are confident that they are dealt with effectively. Students show excellent awareness of the need to behave safely and are well informed about issues such as drugs and sexual health. The school takes very good measures to ensure students are kept safe, for example, checking adults who have contact with them. The students have a very good understanding of how to lead healthy lives through taking exercise and eating well. Curricular provision such as in science, the wide range of sports-related extra-curricular activities and healthy cafeteria options help with this.

The students form a cohesive community and make a very positive contribution in school. For example, older students support younger ones as 'buddies' and the school council is effective in improving significant aspects of school life as well as being involved in interviews for staff appointments. The students show strong support for the well-being of others and the community

outside. This extends beyond one-off events such as a recent sponsored walk for charity to include many longer-term commitments to charities and worthwhile organisations. Excellent spiritual and moral development is underpinned by the school's Christian ethos. Students engage very well with difficult spiritual and moral issues. Strong curricular provision, including the school's international dimension, ensures they have a very well-developed understanding of global concerns and of the multicultural nature of this country.

The school knows and values all its students as individuals, providing excellent care, guidance and support. The identification and monitoring of students with additional learning needs, including learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is very good. Effective support is provided, for example, through individual mentoring and when additional adults are deployed to classrooms. The support provided in lessons where additional adults are not available is good overall but of variable quality. Effective help is given to those who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour or to attend well. The school has strong links with outside agencies, such as social services, to support vulnerable students. Communication with parents and carers is excellent and particularly strong when there are concerns about a student's progress or behaviour.

Students receive excellent guidance for academic development. The school carefully tracks their progress towards challenging targets. Underachievement triggers effective intervention, for example, in Key Stage 4 through a 'near misses' project. Students are well aware of what to do to improve through regular marking and feedback from teachers and self-assessment. The quality of information regarding options choices and careers at key points is excellent.

Teaching and learning are good overall, with some outstanding practice, particularly in Key Stage 4 lessons. Work to develop teaching and learning further is effective, increasingly led by teachers in subjects related to the school's specialist status. Assessment data is used well in most lessons to match learning to students' needs. Teachers have high expectations and clear objectives for learning. They manage behaviour well, ensuring lessons have an interesting range of tasks, including opportunities to share and extend students' understanding. In a minority of lessons, particularly at Key Stage 3, the needs of less able students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are not planned for well enough.

The curriculum gives outstanding support for students' academic and personal development. The personal, social and health education programme, coupled with religious education, tutor time, assemblies and retreat days, is very well coordinated. Strong academic achievement starts with the highly effective transition programme, centred on strong links with primary schools and involving the students themselves going into primary schools. The curriculum is well planned and developed to meet students' needs, with strengths in academic subjects alongside increasing vocational options in Years 10 and 11. The school's specialist status is making a good impact on the curriculum and participation in the study of history and geography is high. The contribution of specialist status to the community is excellent, for example, through partnership work with schools locally and internationally.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher, through highly effective teamwork, particularly with senior colleagues, ensures a strong focus on improving the academic and personal development of all students. Monitoring and evaluation at senior level are systematic, involve the collection of a wide range of evidence and yield an accurate understanding of most areas requiring improvement. Development plans use challenging targets to stimulate improvement. They focus well on outcomes for students and on exploiting further the school's specialist status. Staff development and recruitment link clearly to the priorities

emerging from the monitoring and evaluation process and to individual staff needs. Middle leadership is largely excellent, with much strong practice in both subject and year leadership. However, the monitoring of teaching does not always lead to the consistent application of agreed approaches, for example, in supporting students of differing abilities in lessons.

The governing body monitors the school extremely well. They are very committed to its continued success, check its progress through vigilant monitoring and challenge if they have concerns.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is good, and supports students' outstanding personal development particularly well. Although achievement is good overall, it is inconsistent. Students make satisfactory progress in Year 12, reaching average standards overall, with some variations between subjects. Progress quickens in Year 13; it is outstanding in some subjects but good overall and the standards reached are above average. Sixth-form students' personal development builds well on the strong foundations established earlier. They provide excellent role models for younger students through their behaviour and attitudes. They make an excellent contribution to both the school and wider community, taking a leading role, for example, on the school council and in charitable work. As with younger students, staff know the students very well and offer a high level of care. This enables them to lead healthy, safe lives and to develop into well-adjusted young people.

The school offers an outstanding curriculum in the sixth form. It reflects many of the strengths found lower down the school in meeting students' needs and interests. It has very strong appeal and students stay on in large numbers. While the bulk of provision is within the school, there is effective collaboration with other providers to offer additional courses where required. The school is proactive in developing collaboration further through planning for new 14–19 diplomas next year. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good overall, with some outstanding practice. Students have excellent relationships with their teachers and many lessons are challenging because of the depth of teachers' subject knowledge and their skills in the classroom. However, through including as wide a range of students as possible into the sixth form, some students are accepted onto advanced level courses with modest levels of prior attainment. Not all lessons cater well enough for these students and the guidance for improvement does not always ensure they make the best possible progress.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The sixth form has developed successfully over time, resulting in an excellent curriculum, strengths in supporting students' personal development and high standards in Year 13. Nevertheless, leadership of the sixth form does not pay enough attention to academic progress when evaluating its overall effectiveness or place enough emphasis on improving achievement in Year 12 to match that in Year 13.

What the school should do to improve further

- Share the best practice in teaching so that lessons consistently meet the needs of all students, including the less able.
- Ensure sixth-form leaders focus on monitoring and improving academic achievement in Year 12.

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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?	1	2
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?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	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?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	2	2
The behaviour of learners	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	1	1

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?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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?	1	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	2
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	1	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	1
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

8 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Cardinal Newman Catholic School, Hove, East Sussex BN3 6ND

This letter is to summarise the outcomes of the recent inspection, to thank you for your participation and to suggest you may want to read the full version of the report.

For students in the main school: ?The school provides you with outstanding education and care. ?Your progress is good in Years 7 and 9 and excellent in Years 10 and 11. ?Your behaviour and attitudes to work are excellent. ?Most of you really enjoy coming to school, attend well and get on very well with each other. ?You told us you feel well cared for and the staff are committed to helping you make as much progress as possible; your parents agree strongly. ?Lessons are good and some are excellent, particularly in Key Stage 4. ?The school provides an outstanding curriculum which supports your academic progress as well as the development of your positive attitudes and behaviour. ?The staff, led by the headteacher, work extremely well together to check how effective the school is and to make improvements where necessary.

For sixth-form students: ?The sixth form is good overall and very popular, with many students staying on. ?You make good progress overall but it is better in Year 13 than Year 12. ?As mature young people you are excellent role models for the younger students. ?The staff take very good care of you and relationships between you and the staff are positive and enable them to give you very good support. ?The school does an excellent job in offering the subjects you want to study. ?The sixth form is well led and is an important feature of the school.

In any school, even one judged outstanding, there are ways to improve and I have asked the headteacher to focus on the following areas in development planning: ?To make sure that more lessons, especially in Years 7 to 9 and Year 12, help less able students make more progress. ?To check the long-term progress of students in Year 12 and improve it so it is as good as in Year 13.

Thanks again for your help and good luck for the future.

Stephen Long Her Majesty's Inspector