

The Cardinal Wiseman Roman Catholic School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101934
Local Authority	Ealing
Inspection number	323553
Inspection date	3 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Asyia Kazmi 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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1863
Sixth form	333
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Maggie Pound
Headteacher	Mr Paul Patrick
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2006
School address	Greenford Road Greenford UB6 9AW
Telephone number	020 8575 8222
Fax number	020 8833 2090

Age group	11–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, teaching and learning, students' personal development and well-being, aspects of leadership and management and the effectiveness of the sixth form.

Evidence was collected from: visits to lessons, national assessment data and the school's own records and analyses, observation of lessons and of the school at work, discussions with staff and students, and parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

The Cardinal Wiseman School is a popular, larger than average Catholic school. Approximately 40% of the students are White British and 60% are from a diverse range of minority ethnic heritages, which is a high proportion. Predominant groups are of Caribbean, Irish or Eastern European heritage. Although the majority of students are baptised Catholics, approximately 15% of students are from other faiths. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language, at 17%, is higher than average. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities, predominantly in the areas of communication or socialisation, is broadly average. However, the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is above average.

The school has specialist technology status and a second specialism in humanities. It also has an International School Award. The school is a National Support School and the headteacher a National Leader of Education.

At the time of the inspection, the substantive headteacher was on sabbatical and the deputy headteacher was fulfilling the role of the acting headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Cardinal Wiseman is an outstanding school. Inspectors agree with the comment of a parent that, 'The ethos of the school fosters achievement and success in a caring atmosphere.' A high number of parents responded to the parental questionnaire and an overwhelming majority were very positive about the work of the school.

Students' achievement is outstanding. The rate of progress made by the students in Cardinal Wiseman places the school in the top 3% nationally. All groups of students share in this success and achieve standards significantly higher than their peers achieve nationally. The proportion of students who achieve five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics, at 77%, continues to rise and is well above the national average. Students join the school with standards that are broadly average. By the end of Year 11, standards overall, and in English and mathematics in particular, are exceptionally high, and pay testament to the school's motto 'Education for all = Achievement for all'.

Students are educated, in the broadest sense of the word. As a result, their personal development and well-being are outstanding. A student told inspectors, 'The school considers every aspect of your life and gives you opportunities to shine.' This was evident in the many talents, including poetry, Irish dancing, art and music, demonstrated by just one form group, who presented the Year 9 assembly. Students are taught to be active citizens within the school community, and also locally and globally. Students are members of the West London Citizens programme to improve life in the local community, and have won an award for their work. The school's commitment to healthy living is exemplary. Use in the canteen is made of vegetables grown by students and parents in the school's allotment. Innovative practice includes a teacher in charge of the hospitality and catering course who oversees the catering in the school canteen, and is also involved in the planning of the personal, social and health programme delivered to students. All this ensures that students are prepared very well to lead healthy lives.

The Catholic ethos, which underpins all aspects of school life, is evident in the exceptional care, guidance and support provided to all students, and in the harmonious school community made up of a wide range of cultures and faiths. This is summed up in the comments of one student, 'We are one family.' There are very positive relationships between students and teachers. Students value very much teachers' support and guidance, and many note how teachers listen to them and act on their views. Students' behaviour is excellent and they feel safe. They know there is always someone available to help them.

Senior leaders have very high expectations and in a supportive way challenge staff to deliver outcomes for students. They see the attainment of five good GCSE passes as a key threshold. It is a credit to the school and students that, at 94%, a very high proportion of students achieve this. There is a can-do approach in the school and teachers are encouraged to be innovative in their practice. Senior leaders are very knowledgeable and confident educationalists. They work with external partners to ensure they are abreast of educational developments, and implement actions that suit their needs. Attention is paid to developing the talents of staff within the school through coaching and mentoring, so staff retention is high. The school is an integral part of the local community, and future building plans are designed to ensure that it remains so. There are very strong community links, which include catering for elderly parishioners, well-attended adult classes, and courses for parents of children with dyslexia, as well as a grief education programme for those experiencing loss.

Senior leaders are not complacent. Despite very high attendance and excellent behaviour, they have a strong focus on prevention and early intervention. Vulnerable students are targeted for support from a wide range of innovative programmes, such as 'Image in Action', aimed at developing self-awareness and self-esteem. Exclusions are lower than average and have declined further since the last inspection.

The achievement of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is exceptionally high. This is because very careful attention is paid to their needs. For example, after identifying that the progress of some students in Key Stage 3 was not as high as they would expect, teachers undertook research, provided training for staff, and redesigned the curriculum to enable more teaching time in the core subjects. Students themselves have been involved in training teachers in identifying teaching methods which best help them learn. The impact of this work is evident in the much improved progress rates of targeted students. The support for looked after children is excellent. Staff work with a wide range of external organisations and frequently review students' progress. Support staff are instrumental in this work and ensure very effective communication with subject teachers to ensure that students are on target.

Students achieve very well because teaching is outstanding, and there is very close alignment of pastoral and academic teams. There is a single development plan for the curriculum team and the student support team. This means the work of everyone is focused on raising students' achievement. Analysis of students' progress and monitoring of their work are methodical and meticulous. Departmental meetings are used to discuss individual students, so that timely intervention can be provided. Students are targeted for booster sessions, and those who need extra support benefit from 'shoulder days' every half term, where students are able to receive specific teaching to address gaps in their learning. At other times, students benefit from the wide variety of visits and activities on offer on these days.

A range of qualifications is offered, both academic and vocational, allowing the curriculum to be carefully tailored to suit the needs of students, so they achieve highly. Those who need extra support are allocated additional lessons. Higher-attaining students in Key Stage 4 can study for advanced supplementary (AS) level courses, in which they achieve considerable success. International links with countries such as Cuba are utilised to broaden the curriculum in a meaningful way. An example is a statistics project in mathematics, where students compared attitudes, perceptions and facilities available to students in England and Cuba. This helps students to get a deeper perspective on other cultures and to reflect on issues such as equal opportunities. Schemes of work and lesson plans include how students' spiritual, moral, cultural and social understanding will be developed, and ensure that this aspect is nurtured in a holistic and meaningful way across the school. The impact of the school's specialism is evident in the standards and the opportunities students have across the curriculum. The inspection findings are summed up in a parent's comment: 'I find the school has a strong identity and a tradition of strong teaching and leadership. As a parent, I have always been well informed of my children's progress both emotionally and intellectually. Problems that may arise are always dealt with efficiently and effectively, and teachers take the time to call parents and discuss any concerns.'

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The leadership of the sixth form and the care, guidance and support provided to students are outstanding. Students recognise the high expectations that teachers have of them, and report, 'Teachers knew I could do better even before I did. The school does not give up on anyone and gets you grades you would not expect.' Academic guidance is detailed and regular. Half-termly

assessment points ensure sixth form tutors and curriculum leaders have timely information to enable them to target students for extra support. The use of support staff and the home-school officer in the sixth form is excellent. It ensures that parents are very aware of their children's progress and are confident in contacting the school if they need to. Supervised study periods are raising standards, and students appreciate the impact of support staff in raising achievement; as one commented, 'The support teacher made me improve my work. They wouldn't settle for lower-grade work.'

Improvements in the sixth form since the last inspection include the development of schemes of work in all subjects, which incorporate study skills in order to facilitate independent learning. The school recognises that this is an area where further development is needed, and is addressing this through training for staff. Teaching and learning are good overall, with examples of outstanding teaching. In some subjects, students' achievement is outstanding, but overall it is good. This is because in a few subjects, some affected by staffing issues such as science and drama, achievement has not been as consistent as the best in the school. The impact of the support provided by senior leaders in these subject areas can be seen in substantially increased standards in 2008.

Students are extremely positive about the support provided by staff, and they overwhelmingly appreciate the time and commitment of all in ensuring their success. One said: 'The school opens up opportunities I would not otherwise get. Everything I wrote in my university application was because of what the school did for me.' Students benefit from an excellent range of opportunities for personal development. These include accompanying children with disabilities to Lourdes, visiting Cuba to enrich their art and music studies, and taking a cooking course to prepare them for university life. Many students are the first in their families to attend universities, and the school is active in raising aspirations through working with families, as well as ensuring that students are exposed to university experiences from as early as Year 11.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop students' independence in learning in the sixth form, so it is consistent across all subjects.

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
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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	1
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	1

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/or disabilities make progress	1	

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
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	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1	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	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	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	

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

16 December 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of The Cardinal Wiseman Roman Catholic School, Greenford, UB6 9AW

On behalf of Dr Corp and myself who visited your school recently, I would like to thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us. We valued the discussions we had with you and I would like to take this opportunity to share our findings.

Yours is an outstanding school and you are right to be proud of it. Many of you, and your parents, told us how much you valued the support of all staff, particularly your teachers. We agree with you: teaching in your school is outstanding, which in turn enables you achieve exceptionally high standards that are well above the national average. This is a testament to the work of all the staff in your school, but also to your own efforts. We were impressed with your behaviour and also by how well you get on with each other, and the contribution you make to your communities. Your attitude to learning is excellent, and staff are very good at addressing your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Your international links help you to gain a deep understanding about our world. Staff in your school provide you with many opportunities to excel, and this is seen in the wide range of clubs and activities in which you are involved. Your school is exceptionally well led, and senior leaders are very aware of what needs to be done to maintain the success of your school. We have asked them to continue their focus on the sixth form in ensuring that teaching there consistently develops students to be independent in their learning.

It was a pleasure to visit your school, and I wish you and your school continued success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Asyia Kazmi

Her Majesty's Inspector