

Cardinal Newman Sixth Form College

Inspection report

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 – outstanding*
- *grade 2 – good*
- *grade 3 – satisfactory*
- *grade 4 – inadequate*

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body; and where appropriate the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits or quality monitoring inspection; and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management.

Description of the provider

1. Cardinal Newman College is a popular Catholic sixth form college in Preston. It has grown in size significantly over recent years and currently has on roll 2,209 learners, most of whom are aged 16 to 18 on full-time advanced level courses. An extensive range of General Certificate of Education (GCE) AS and A-level courses and Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) qualifications are delivered at level 3. A broad range of vocational level 2 courses, along with resit GCSEs in English, mathematics and science, are available for students who wish to attend the college and do not have the entry requirements to study a higher level course. There are 35 young people with specific learning needs studying an essential skills course. All full-time students follow a religious education programme. The college's adult provision has been rationalised to English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses for around 100 part-time learners.
2. Around half of students are from one of the college's 10 partner Catholic high schools with the remainder from other high schools in and around Preston and South Ribble. The college has a broad social, cultural and spiritual diversity that reflects the local community. The proportion of full-time students aged 16 to 18 from minority ethnic groups is similar to that in Preston and all adult students are from minority ethnic groups as the provision has been established to meet the local need.
3. Preston has a population of around 132,000; unemployment is slightly higher than the national average and there are significant areas of deprivation that affect 37% of the population. The Avenham ward in Preston where the college is located is one of the most economically deprived in the North West. The number of school leavers in Preston achieving five A* to C grades at GCSE is in line with the national average.
4. The mission statement of the college is: 'As a Catholic Sixth Form College we strive to be a centre of educational excellence for the Community built on faith, respect and trust. We celebrate diversity amongst all our students and staff, and seek to nurture the gifts of each individual through high quality teaching and learning and dedicated pastoral care'.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Capacity to improve	Outstanding: Grade 1
Achievement and standards	Outstanding: Grade 1
Quality of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding: Grade 1
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Outstanding: grade 1</i>

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

5. Cardinal Newman is an outstanding Catholic college in every aspect. The inclusive ethos provides a strong foundation, upon which respect of different faiths and cultures allows its students to thrive and develop as individuals in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Expectations and standards are very high throughout the college. The mission and ethos, acknowledged as strengths at the last inspection, have been further strengthened. Students, staff and governors are rightly proud of their college. In their attitudes and daily work they fully embrace the life of a Catholic community built on faith, respect, love and trust where each individual is nurtured and valued as unique.
6. Achievement and standards are outstanding. Success rates and the proportion of students achieving high grades are very high. Students' academic progress and personal development is exceptional. They develop very good skills for their future lives. Retention and attendance rates are particularly impressive.
7. Teaching and learning are outstanding. A variety of challenging and innovative teaching strategies, including the use of information learning technology (ILT), is used to engage students and support learning. Students enjoy lessons and the broader aspects of college life. They participate fully and make significant contributions to the college and wider community. The college's response to education and social inclusion is outstanding. Opportunities to celebrate students' achievements and cultural diversity are varied and innovative. The broad range of courses, including an extensive enrichment programme in which all students participate, reflects the very inclusive ethos of the college.
8. Guidance and support are outstanding. Students' self-esteem and confidence are successfully developed through comprehensive and highly effective support services that foster good relationships and care for the individual. Students' progress is carefully monitored so that all achieve their full potential. Opportunities for shared prayer, worship and reflection of all faiths are excellent. Students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully integrated into the college's community. Arrangements to meet students' and local community needs are outstanding.
9. Leadership and management are outstanding. Inspirational leadership, supported by highly competent senior managers and governors, sets a very clear direction for the college as a centre of educational excellence. Equality of opportunity is outstanding. Robust and supportive performance management establishes aspirational targets and informs staff development. Students' views are valued and acted upon. Quality assurance systems are relentless in maintaining the very best and bringing about further improvements. Partnerships are productive in meeting the needs of the local area. The college has a strong relationship with the diocese. Financial management is outstanding.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: Grade 1

10. Capacity to improve is outstanding. The high standards from the last inspection have been improved upon year-on-year and the students' achievements now place the college at the very top of sixth form college performance tables.
11. Self-assessment is inclusive, detailed and rigorous; the report is accurate. All aspects of the college are monitored effectively and staff are encouraged to be innovative in developing new ideas to maintain very high standards and striving for further improvements. Quality improvement is exceptionally good. Any minor aspects for improvement are identified quickly and acted upon swiftly.

The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection

12. Improvements since the last inspection are outstanding. The rapid improvements recognised at the last inspection have continued at an exceptional pace. The use of ILT in supporting teaching and learning are now outstanding with many innovative features. The accommodation is very much improved with new buildings, refurbishment of science laboratories and classrooms, landscaping and new student social areas. There remain a few areas where further improvements are planned. The resources to support learning, including specialist equipment and dedicated staff, are excellent. Key skills provision has been restructured. Achievement, including the certificate of personal effectiveness (COPE) which is completed by all students, are excellent. Pass and retention rates are exceptionally high on almost all courses and no course is below the national average.

Key strengths

- living, vibrant Catholic ethos that celebrates all aspects of the college's life and work
- highly inclusive college
- outstanding success rates and proportion of high grades
- exceptionally high retention and attendance
- excellent progress and holistic approach to students' academic and personal development
- imaginative and challenging teaching engages and supports learners
- responsive and productive partnerships with the diocese and wider community to meet local needs
- exceptional participation in an innovative programme of enrichment
- very well considered religious education (RE) programme structured around the college's mission and values is enjoyed and valued by students
- outstanding support and innovative on-line monitoring system in which all students are valued and their potential fully developed
- robust, inclusive and very effective performance management to achieve challenging targets
- outstanding management in a culture of accountability, challenge and relentless focus on quality improvement
- inspirational leadership and strategic vision
- highly effective and responsive communications at all levels
- superb resources, dedicated staff and outstanding financial management.

Areas for improvement

- there are no significant areas for improvement.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Outstanding: Grade 1

13. The inspection confirmed that achievement and standards are outstanding. Success rates are well above the national average and continue to improve. The college's results in 2008 place it at the very top of the performance tables of all colleges. The exceptionally high standard and presentation of students' work along with college data indicate further improvements this year. Students make excellent progress and achieve far better than that predicted by their attainment at enrolment. The proportion of students achieving grades A or B on GCE AS and A-level courses are very high and well above the national average. Pass rates on AS and A-level general studies, undertaken by all advanced level students, are very good. Achievement and the proportion of students achieving high grades on vocational courses are exceptional. Almost all vocational students achieve at least one higher grade and almost two thirds achieve a full set of distinction grades. Many students successfully achieve well in both GCE and vocational courses. In-year retention and attendance rates are exceptionally high. Pass rates at grades A* to C on GCSE courses are high. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on the essential skills course develop in confidence and make excellent progress; all have progressed to relevant employment or a further education (FE) course. Success on key skills courses is high. All full-time students successfully complete a level 3 COPE. Success rates of part-time adult students on ESOL courses are well above the national average.
14. The college's holistic approach to students' academic and personal development is excellent. Students' achievement and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are nurtured and celebrated in a variety of innovative ways. Students enjoy their time at college and develop a greater understanding of diversity and tolerance of different faiths and cultures in an atmosphere of trust, harmony and mutual respect. They participate fully in the wide and varied opportunities available and make significant contributions to the college and its wider community. Students develop into confident and articulate young people with very good skills for their future lives including university and employment. Progression to higher education (HE) is very high.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

15. Inspectors confirm that the quality of provision is outstanding. The college has improved significantly since the last inspection and is focused on delivering the highest quality of education within a welcoming, happy, caring and safe community. Significant resources have been invested in achieving outstanding provision.
16. The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding which reflects the college's self-assessment grade. Challenging and innovative teaching is central to the college's commitment to very high standards and students' enjoyment. An effective virtual learning environment (VLE) is routinely well used by staff and

students to support learning. Teachers identify learners' needs and monitor their progress frequently and thoroughly. Initial assessment is thorough and teachers make good use of learners' prior attainment to plan lessons and support learners with different start points. Assessment practices are very rigorous; teachers provide learners with good developmental feedback on their progress. Students clearly know how well they are doing and how they can improve their work. Parents and carers are well informed about learners' progress.

17. Internal lesson observations are robust and support further developments and innovative practice. Very good use is made of the outcomes of the observation process to fully inform an excellent staff development programme. The sharing of good practice is firmly embedded. However, insufficient staff are involved in the moderation of the observation of teaching and learning. New teaching staff benefit from excellent induction and support.
18. Learners are highly motivated and keen to learn; they treat peers with respect and value each other's differences. Lessons have excellent pace and students participate enthusiastically. Students develop high level skills; they are determined, thoughtful and reflective in pursuing their academic goals. Students produce portfolios of amazing quality and develop excellent examination skills. Teachers use praise well to inspire and motivate learners; they are particularly skilled at meeting the varying needs of all their learners. A wide variety of challenging and innovative teaching strategies, including the use of ILT, are used to engage learners including discussion and debate, role-play, group work, paired work and learner presentations. Enthusiastic teachers have a passion for their subject; high levels of subject expertise and high aspirations for their learners. Excellent support workshops are well resourced and routinely attended by students to access extra support to meet their individual needs. Dedicated teachers give freely of their time to help students succeed.
19. Arrangements to meet students and local community needs are outstanding. The college offers a responsive and flexible curriculum. A broad range of 49 GCE AS and 47 A-level courses are offered. An effective and growing vocational programme at levels 2 and 3 is provided. Students can combine academic and vocational courses. Progression rates from level 2 to level 3 are excellent. The needs of the local community are met by part-time ESOL provision for adults. A highly successful bespoke essential skills programme meets the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The college has good involvement in developing and delivering the new Diplomas.
20. Managers and staff have excellent links with local employers and a comprehensive work placement programme. Curriculum links with partner high schools are very effective in promoting progression to post-16 education.
21. Students participate enthusiastically in the extensive enrichment programme which includes numerous college trips, excursions, visits abroad, sport and musical activities and sports academies. Enrichment provides learners with a broad range of learning experiences, effectively meeting their different needs and interests. A well considered programme for gifted and talented students

provides opportunities for them to take Advanced Extension Awards in a range of subjects and AS critical thinking.

22. Inspectors agreed with the college that guidance and support are outstanding and fully reflect its mission, ethos and inclusive culture where every student matters. Students' self-esteem and confidence are successfully developed through comprehensive, highly effective pastoral and support systems that foster mutual respect, good relationships and care for the individual.
23. Arrangements for recruitment, enrolment and induction are excellent. Students make well-informed choices and settle quickly into the college and their courses. Very few change course following induction and retention is exceptionally high.
24. Students with specific learning needs are fully integrated in college life. Systems to identify individuals' support needs are well defined, systematic and co-ordinated so that they are accurately identified and quickly put in place. Students speak confidently of the improvements they have made in their courses as a result of additional support.
25. The exemplary arrangements for tracking and monitoring student progress through the college's on-line information systems provide a continuous dialogue between teachers, personal tutors and support services. Students at risk from underachieving are very quickly identified and very effective individual support strategies improve performance.
26. The well thought out and inclusive tutorial programme offers excellent opportunities for personal and social education and embeds the Every Child Matters themes into its learning outcomes. The shared lesson plans and learning materials nurture the gifts of each individual through high quality teaching and dedicated pastoral care. The COPE effectively develops students' study and learning skills. Support in preparation for HE is excellent.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: Grade 1

Contributory grade:

Equality of opportunity

Outstanding: Grade 1

27. Leadership and management are outstanding. The principal's vision, leadership and personal commitment to promoting the college's ethos and values, supported very well by highly competent senior managers and governors, sets a clear strategic direction and purpose for this highly successful college. It is very successful in meeting the needs of the students and staff from diverse faiths and cultures in the wider local community. High expectations in a culture of trust and mutual respect place students' development and achievements at the centre of all aspects of college life. Consequently success rates, high grade achievement and value added have improved year-on-year and are very high.

28. All managers are fully aware of their responsibilities and are very effective in setting, meeting and often exceeding aspirational targets. Robust and supportive performance management is exceptionally effective. Quality assurance systems are relentless in maintaining the very best and bringing about further improvements with a particular focus on developments in teaching and learning. An effective lesson observation system facilitates the sharing of good practice and informs a comprehensive staff development programme. Teachers are encouraged to develop new ideas to support learning.
29. Self-assessment is a continuous process with very effective termly monitoring by senior managers. Management information and data on student attendance, retention and achievements are used very well to inform the process, although middle managers do not yet have on-line access to course data. Minor aspects for improvement are identified and acted upon quickly.
30. Communications are exceptionally good. A framework of regular meetings and high quality written communications inform students, staff and governors of key issues and celebrate the college's achievements and individuals' successes.
31. Equality of opportunity is outstanding. Equality and diversity permeates all aspects of college life and is very well promoted through subjects and the tutorial programme. Students' views are valued and acted upon. Students from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as others in the college. The college has a number of projects to promote participation of under-represented groups in non-traditional subjects. The college complies with its legal requirements in response to equalities on race, disability and safeguarding young people.
32. Partnerships are productive in meeting the needs of the local area. The college has a strong relationship with the diocese. The college has very good links with partner high schools and is a lead player in the new diploma developments.
33. Governance is outstanding. Governors have a good range of skills and are totally committed to the college's mission and Catholic ethos. They are regularly involved in celebrating students' achievement, college liturgies and closely monitor subject and financial performance. Financial management and value for money are outstanding. Resources are very carefully deployed with significant resources set aside to provide extra subject support sessions. The new accommodation, well qualified and dedicated staff, specialist facilities and professionally produced teaching resources to support learning are excellent.

Learners' achievement

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, compared with the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
All Long - Level 1	05/06	41	46	71	-25	201	21	57	-36
	06/07	46	83	73	10	153	65	64	1
	07/08	21	90			87	74	*	
GNVQs/ AVCEs	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07	13	92	79	13	...	...	...	...
	07/08	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
NVQs	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	07/08	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Other	05/06	41	46	71	-25	201	21	57	-36
	06/07	33	79	72	7	153	65	64	1
	07/08	21	90			87	74	*	

* college data

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, compared with the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
All Long - Level 2	05/06	1252	89	78	11	50	26	65	-39
	06/07	1307	91	82	9	10	50	65	-15
	07/08	1604	96			15	73	*	
GCSEs	05/06	1153	90	82	8	7	57	67	-10
	06/07	1191	91	83	8	9	56	68	-12
	07/08	1419	96			3	100	*	
GNVQs/ AVCEs	05/06	45	89	77	12	...	...	...	...
	06/07	40	85	78	7	...	...	...	...
	07/08	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
NVQs	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	07/08	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Other	05/06	54	78	70	8	43	21	62	-41
	06/07	76	91	79	12	1	0	62	-62
	07/08	185	96			12	67	*	

* college data

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2006 to 2008, compared with the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
All Long - Level 3	05/06	5165	90	84	6	19	84	65	19
	06/07	5181	91	85	6	3	0	69	-69
	07/08	6947	92			17	100	*	
A/A2 Levels	05/06	1882	96	93	3	13	77	78	-1
	06/07	1916	96	93	3	3	0	80	-80
	07/08	1958	98			7	100	*	
AS Levels	05/06	3103	87	79	8	1	100	58	42
	06/07	3138	87	81	6	...	...	...	...
	07/08	4008	89			6	100	*	
GNVQs/AVCEs	05/06	142	87	77	10	1	100	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	07/08	...	...	...	...
NVQs	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	07/08	...	...	...	...
Other	05/06	38	71	79	-8	4	100	62	38
	06/07	127	87	80	7	...	...	...	...
	07/08	981	94			4	100	*	

* college data