

Cardinal Heenan Catholic High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104714
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	336353
Inspection dates	9–10 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Michael McLachlan

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	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1503
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	270
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew Tremarco
Headteacher	Mr Dave Forshaw
Date of previous school inspection	8 October 2006
School address	Honeysgreen Lane Liverpool Merseyside L12 9HZ
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by six additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 42 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including school policies, the minutes of senior leaders' and governors' meetings, safeguarding records, analyses of examination results for the main school and the sixth form, and 42 parental questionnaires.

- the attainment and progress of pupils and students, particularly in mathematics and in the sixth form
- how the school evaluates the quality of teaching and learning and shares best practice
- the provision for care and guidance and how effectively vulnerable and difficult pupils are supported
- the impact of the changes made to the curriculum since the last inspection
- the level of challenge provided by senior and middle leaders in addressing areas of weakness in the school.

Information about the school

Cardinal Heenan Catholic High School for boys is a substantially larger than average comprehensive school situated on the outskirts of the city of Liverpool. The school is popular and over-subscribed. It draws its pupils from a wide range of feeder parishes. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, at 23.7%, is above average. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is just above the national average, although the number issued with a statement of special educational needs is below average. Around 4% of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds; few are at an early stage of learning English. The school is a specialist sports college and is a member of the Specialist Schools Trust's 'Most Improved Club'. It also holds awards for Healthy Schools, Investors in People and Dyslexia Friendly Schools. It is a member of the East Liverpool Collaborative through which joint sixth form provision is organised alongside four other schools.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school with many excellent features and can rightly be described as 'on the cusp' of being outstanding overall. A particular strength of the school is the rich, varied curriculum which is well matched to pupils' needs and aspirations. This has been developed through good leadership and through outstanding partnerships with other providers. Consequently, overall outcomes for pupils are good. Pupils' attainment is above average and in some subjects such as English it is particularly high. Pupils make at least good and often outstanding progress given their starting points. Outcomes and progress in mathematics have been below national averages. Effective actions led to improved results in 2009, including in mathematics. Accurate assessments indicate that standards in mathematics are set to improve still further for the current cohort of Year 11 students. There is secure evidence for this as a significant proportion of pupils, through the innovative 'fast track' system, have already achieved a good grade. Weaknesses in science and in some subjects at AS level have been identified and robust plans are in place to address these concerns.

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to their school and local community through the work of the school council and membership of the Liverpool Youth Forum. Their engagement in promoting healthy lifestyles is impressive, with a high take up of sports activity. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding due to the Christian ethos that permeates the life of the school, pupils' involvement with local and international communities, and the excellent work of specialist college community cohesion team. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Where teaching is satisfactory, the work set is insufficiently challenging with little opportunity for pupils to develop their own learning skills. Assessment to promote learning is well used across the school.

Government requirements for ensuring the safety of pupils are met. Visitors and contract staff are appropriately monitored on the school site. While there are many good features to the school's safeguarding systems, in one instance, leaders have not been sufficiently robust in monitoring the pace at which a contractor has implemented the more stringent requirements placed on it by the school earlier this term. Consequently, governance and the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures overall are satisfactory rather than good. The school has good capacity to improve. This is evidenced by the continued academic success in the vast majority of subjects, the innovative developments in the curriculum, the outstanding partnerships, overwhelming support from parents, and the school's robust self-evaluation, which has enabled the leadership to tackle weaknesses and improve achievement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Raise attainment in mathematics, science and in the weaker AS subjects, this year and in subsequent years, so that the proportion of pupils who reach the higher grades is in line with the highly successful subjects such as English.
- Ensure the best practice seen in teaching, which enables pupils to be active, independent learners, is shared consistently across and within all faculties.
- With immediate effect, ensure governors and leaders monitor external contracts more rigorously.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils' learning is good. Overall, results at GCSE are above average and progress is good and often outstanding in relation to pupils' starting points. Good teaching and sensitive care, guidance and support systems ensure that the quality of learning and progress is good for all pupils including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. In most subjects, the vast majority of pupils responded with enthusiasm in lessons observed. This was particularly true when they were faced with challenging activities. Where learning was only satisfactory, insufficient opportunity was given for pupils to take a lead in their own learning as tasks set involved mundane, repetitive practice.

Overall, GCSE results continued to rise with nearly eight out of ten pupils achieving five good grades. A particular strength is in English, where just over 70% achieved a higher grade. This is well above the national average for boys. Results in mathematics over the last few years have been significantly out of line with this very positive picture. Robust action has been taken, including strengthening leadership and changing the curriculum by starting GCSE in Year 9 and early AS programmes in Year 11. Teachers now plan lessons that make pupils become active learners. A significant number of students failed to reach a grade in the BTEC science course in 2009. The school has a robust action plan to raise attainment in this subject.

Pupils enjoy school as shown by their well above average attendance. Behaviour is good in lessons and as pupils move around what are very old buildings with particularly narrow corridors. Pupils say they feel safe in the school, that any untoward behaviour or bullying is dealt with effectively by the staff and that there is always an adult to turn to if needed. The excellent curriculum combined with high expectations and good care and guidance systems ensure that many aspects of pupils' personal development are outstanding.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

In the vast majority of lessons observed, teaching was good and around a one-fifth was outstanding. A key feature of these lessons was the expectation for pupils to take the lead in driving their own learning and securing understanding. Activities were planned well and placed demands on the pupils to make connections for themselves with only hints and prompts from the teacher to sharpen the pupils' thinking. For example, in a GCSE mathematics lesson, pupils were given data presented in three different formats and challenged to work out the connection within and between the information given. Where teaching was satisfactory or weaker, teachers dominated the lesson, giving pupils little time to think for themselves. Overall, good systems for setting challenging targets and assessing pupils' work are in place so that most pupils know what they need to do to improve.

The school provides an outstanding curriculum. The 'Opening Minds' programme in Years 7 and 8, the 'fast track' programme in Year 9 and the early AS in Year 11 are excellent examples of matching the curriculum to the needs of pupils. The richness of the range of courses on offer and the exemplary extra-curricular activities, together with specialist college sports and information and communication technology programmes, ensure pupils of all abilities have an enjoyable experience. Hence, the high levels of attendance at school and the excellent take up of further education or work-based learning post-16.

The school provides good care and guidance. Pupils say they feel safe and are cared for well. They expressed high levels of satisfaction in the way the school plans for transition. For example, the extended opportunities to visit the school in Year 6 and the

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preparation and advice in support of their move to further education, work or training. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are vulnerable are served well by support in the classroom and by exemplary partnerships with a range of agencies that meet their specific needs. Consequently, outcomes for these pupils in terms of academic achievement and personal development are good.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, his senior staff and the recently created heads of faculty share a common goal to raise aspirations and improve on what is already a high performing school. For example, leadership in mathematics has identified that the key to sustained success is improving the quality of pupils' independent learning skills alongside raising the expectations of teachers and pupils, together with a more targeted preparation for examinations. A well developed action plan has been produced which includes a good training programme using local authority support to raise the game in this subject. The school has established outstanding partnerships with a range of agencies and education providers to meet the needs of all pupils. Parents and carers express high levels of satisfaction with the way the school works with them and their children. For example, through the school's excellent web-based information systems which keep parents very well informed of their child's progress and behaviour and enable them to support learning at home.

Exemplary systems are in place to promote community cohesion and pupils welcome the many opportunities to contribute locally and make links with pupils from other countries and cultures. There is a sensitive, well-planned programme of personal and social education and very good support for vulnerable pupils. Consequently, the schools is highly effective in promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. The school's safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory and are well publicised through notices on the front doors of the school and in the corridors, so that all staff, pupils and visitors are aware of the school's expectations.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Attainment is broadly average at A and AS level and above average in vocational subjects. Good teaching and expert subject knowledge ensure students make good progress in most subjects. Students seen in lessons were often confident, articulate and independent learners. However, this was not consistent across all lessons as students were not always challenged sufficiently to take control of their own learning or engage in debate and argument. Regular assessment and review against challenging targets ensures students and parents are well informed of progress so that intervention can take place when necessary. Consequently, overall achievement is good.

Students have access to a good curriculum which has some outstanding features. There is a wide range of academic and vocational courses available through the consortia, which meets the students' needs well whatever their prior attainment or specific needs. There is an exceptional range of enrichment courses and opportunities for students to contribute to the school and the wider community, which ensures students' personal development outcomes are at least good. Students express high levels of satisfaction with their course provision and the good care and guidance they receive. This ensures all are able to transfer to higher education or to work successfully. The sixth form is well led and its work evaluated effectively. For example, the school has identified a number of courses at AS level where students have not achieved as well as might be expected. Robust plans, including an accelerated curriculum to enable some students to start AS early, are in hand to address these weaknesses.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

In error, the school sent out a different version of the Ofsted questionnaire to the one below. This questionnaire included a wider range of questions which covered most of the ones in the table below and also asked about the school's expectations for pupils to work hard, to complete homework, views on extra-curricular activities, the fairness of treatment by staff, the support for pupils with special educational needs and the school's procedures for complaints. Two questions from the table below were not included, these were the fifth on teaching and the sixth on support for learning.

The overwhelming majority of parents expressed their support for the school's work in all aspects including the additional questions outlined above. Parents commented particularly on the way they were kept informed on their child's work and progress through the school's internet based systems.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cardinal Heenan Catholic High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 42 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1503 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	15	36	24	57	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	17	40	22	52	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	21	50	20	48	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	45	22	52	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	1	2	3	7	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	1	2	3	7	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	43	23	55	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	17	40	24	57	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	50	19	45	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	50	20	48	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	33	26	62	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	22	52	19	45	0	0	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	26	62	16	38	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



11 November 2009

Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of Cardinal Heenan Catholic High School, Liverpool, L12 9HZ

I would like to thank all of you for making us feel welcome during your recent inspection. We were very impressed by the way you responded to us, to your teachers and other staff when we observed you at work and outside lessons.

We judge your school to be good with many outstanding features and we consider that the school is very close to being outstanding overall.

We were particularly impressed with the large numbers of you who achieve good grades in your exams and how much progress you make in your school. You are taught well, particularly in the lessons where you have to take responsibility for your own learning. Mr Forshaw and his staff have planned an excellent curriculum in the main school and interesting and wide range of courses in the sixth form. The staff of the school work very hard in providing you with an outstanding range of enrichment activities so you achieve well, enjoy your time in school and become the mature, thoughtful and well behaved young people that we met.

You will have seen in the report that we think you demonstrate many outstanding personal characteristics. This is because of the good care and guidance you receive and the high expectations your headteacher and his team have of themselves and of you. In order for you to become an outstanding school there are some areas you and the staff need to improve:

- results in mathematics, science and some of the AS courses need to be higher
- you and your teachers need to work together to develop your independent learning skills so that you are confident to take charge of your own learning
- governors and the school leaders need to monitor external contracts more rigorously.

I am sure your school will become an even more exciting place to work and play in if you accept the challenge to become better learners.

Yours sincerely

Mr Michael McLachlan

Lead inspector

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