

Cardinal Newman Catholic School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	114611
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	395326
Inspection dates	23–24 May 2012
Lead inspector	Jacqueline White 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
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	2107
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	387
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Charles Wookey
Teacher in charge	Dr James Kilmartin
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2007
School address	The Upper Drive Hove BN3 6ND
Telephone number	01273 558551
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Victor Chaffey

Additional inspector

Christine Murrell

Additional inspector

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Additional inspector

Nigel Pressnell

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 57 lessons and 56 teachers. They also held meetings with members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders and groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at its performance data and other documents, including the school improvement plan, safeguarding and equality policies, and the minutes of governing body meetings. Inspectors took account of any responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection and analysed questionnaires returned by 337 parents and carers, 230 completed by students and 69 from staff.

Information about the school

Cardinal Newman is a large, oversubscribed school whose students come from a wide area. About three quarters are Roman Catholic, with the remainder from other Christian backgrounds. The school has specialist status for humanities and is a training school. The student population is very stable, with few students leaving other than on completion of their studies. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Approximately 28% of students are from minority ethnic groups and an above average number speak languages other than English, although most are fluent in English. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The school is above the government's current floor standards, the minimum expectations set for attainment and progress.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- The school provides a good education, including in the sixth form. Most students thrive in the safe, caring learning environment and mature into well-rounded, responsible and considerate young people. Ambitious senior leaders recognise that, while teaching is good overall, there are inconsistencies in practice. Rightly, they pinpoint that this is the reason why the school is not yet outstanding.
- Overall achievement is good. Generally, attainment is high including in specialist humanities subjects. In the sixth form, students' achievement is improving with an increasing number securing higher grades at GCE AS and A level.
- The quality of teaching is good. Most teachers exhibit good subject knowledge and work effectively to challenge and engage students through a range of well-sequenced activities. Pockets of weaker practice were identified, particularly in science. Usually, students have very positive attitudes to their learning. Sixth formers have a very strong work ethic and are positive role models for younger students.
- The school is very orderly and calm. Students have a strong sense of belonging. Behaviour is good overall and sometimes exemplary, but there is occasional low level disruption in some lessons. Relationships are warm and open, reflecting the strong Catholic ethos that permeates the school. Students from all backgrounds socialise and learn together harmoniously. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is a growing strength of the school. Attendance is high and students are very well supported by the effective pastoral system.
- Good leadership and management are the engine of the school's commitment to securing the success of every student. The acting headteacher and senior leaders work as a cohesive team. They are very well supported and challenged by a talented, hard-working governing body. Subject leaders are not equally expert at driving improvements in teaching, but line management is robust and high quality training and interventions are building staff capacity and leadership skills. Staff are as proud as the students to be part of the school and are very clear about their accountability for students' performance.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by systematically sharing best practice. Prioritise:
 - the use of assessment information to plan lessons that challenge all students appropriately including those with special educational needs
 - the sharing of success criteria in lessons so that students appreciate the purpose and direction of their learning
 - the use of questioning to evaluate students' understanding and adapt the lesson accordingly
 - opportunities for students to lead learning in lessons
 - the setting of individualised targets that clarify precisely how students can improve their subject-specific skills
 - marking that identifies the next learning steps that will enable students to attain their targets
- Ensure all middle leaders are equally expert in driving improvements in teaching and learning.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Overall the attainment of students on entry is higher than the national average. Teachers ensure that students are very well prepared for their examinations and they gain GCSE results which are generally well above the average in most subject areas. The exception is science. The school is very well aware of this weakness and has a robust action plan in place which is securing improvement. Progress and outcomes are particularly strong in mathematics, humanities and languages. There is no significant difference in the achievement of students from different ethnic groups. Students with disabilities and those with special educational needs are fully integrated into school life and make good progress because they are successfully supported. The very large majority of parents and carers who completed inspection questionnaires agreed that their children achieve well and this is confirmed by inspection findings.

Most students enjoy school and are keen to do well and succeed. They concentrate well in lessons where the work is interesting, varied, well planned and appropriately challenging. They collaborate enthusiastically and respond very positively to high expectations and opportunities to take responsibility for learning. Students develop very good skills in reading, writing and numeracy which equip them well for the next stage of their education as well as the world of work.

Quality of teaching

Questionnaire responses indicate that most parents and carers believe their children are taught well, and this is mirrored in students' responses. Inspectors agree that

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overall the quality of teaching is good and improving. Several examples of outstanding teaching were seen. However, some satisfactory and a small amount of inadequate teaching was also observed. Provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs is good. Most do well because of the sensitive support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants and because of the personalised programme of interventions. While curriculum planning is helping to ensure most students' needs and interests are being met well, there are occasions in lessons where learning is not sufficiently tailored to meet the needs of the full range of ability in the class. This slows the progress of students with additional needs along with others.

In the lessons where students made most progress, teaching was stimulating. The use of assessment to support learning was highly effective. Well-directed, probing questioning developed thinking skills. There was good reference to success criteria related to clear and appropriate learning objectives. Within a collaborative learning environment, students were given opportunities to lead and apply learning and thereby develop independence and test the limits of their potential. High expectations motivated students to work hard and had a positive impact on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In one outstanding history lesson, skilful and expertly-crafted teaching methods enabled students to get inside the complexities and impact of human conflict in examining the history of the relationship between White and Native Americans.

When students were expected to be passive learners and were not given a variety of activities which provided sufficient engagement, their concentration waned. In these satisfactory lessons, teachers often talked too much, did not crystallise success criteria and limited opportunities for students to work things out for themselves. Questioning tended to require simplistic answers and students' responses were superficial.

Overall, the quality of marking is good. The effective use of comments to explain 'what went well' and 'even better if' provides students with a good understanding of how they are doing and how they can improve. This effective practice has not been fully shared. Similarly, the use of challenging, individualised targets that clarify precisely how students can improve their subject specific skills is underdeveloped in some areas, particularly in the sixth form.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students greatly appreciate the excellent care and support provided by staff. They feel very safe. Most have a high moral code and extend respect and care to each other. Calm and orderly behaviour around the school is the norm. Students readily take responsibility and make a valuable contribution to the day-to-day running of the school. Prefects have been trained to perform the tasks that they undertake very well.

Students show a good understanding of what constitutes different forms of bullying

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and the impact bullying may have on individuals. They are able to say with confidence that incidents are very rare and dealt with swiftly and effectively. Through the questionnaires, a few parents and carers commented that misbehaviour sometimes interrupts learning. There was some evidence of this in a very few of the lessons observed by inspectors, predominantly where teaching was weaker. The school acknowledges this and is working effectively to achieve consistently good teaching. Inspectors agree with most parents', carers' and students' views that behaviour is usually good.

Leadership and management

The acting headteacher has steered the school through a difficult period with steadfastness and courage. He is very well supported by the leadership team and governors. Together, they have sustained a unified sense of purpose and adherence to the strong values that put the needs of students at the heart of everything. The school is an ambitious, outward and forward-looking institution, proud of its history and success, but without complacency. It works productively with a range of partners in the best interests of students. Underperformance is challenged robustly and there is a culture of accountability. Self-evaluation is accurate and self-critical. Development plans are clear, precise and focused effectively on improving teaching and raising achievement further. The school is improving with good capacity to sustain its direction.

The curriculum is good overall. There is a determination to improve the life chances of all students through a curriculum that is tailored well to their needs and abilities. The humanities specialism is characterised by outstanding practice in teaching and has contributed highly effectively to the school's drive to improve the quality of provision. Students speak highly of the excellent range of enrichment activities that contribute powerfully to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The school manages its resources, including its finances, expertly. The governing body demonstrates loyalty and a fervent commitment to improvement, providing very well-informed challenge and excellent support to the school. Procedures for safeguarding are effective and meet all statutory requirements. Systems for monitoring outcomes for different groups of students are very thorough. Well-targeted interventions and tenacious concern for every student underpin the effective promotion of equal opportunities. Discrimination of any kind is challenged with absolute conviction. The school works hard and mostly successfully to develop strong partnerships with parents and carers. It has responded to the view expressed by some that communications could be better by setting up a regular parents' and carers' forum, improving the school website and utilising other available platforms for electronic communication. A parents' and carers' portal is about to be launched. Most of the parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire are positive about their children's experiences and would be happy to recommend the school to others.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



25 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Cardinal Newman Catholic School, Hove BN3 6ND

Thank you for your very warm and friendly welcome when we inspected your school recently. We would particularly like to thank the many of you who spoke with us so clearly and openly. Our inspection found that yours is a good and improving school. The sixth form is also good. Mostly, you make good progress throughout your time at school and your attainment at the end of Year 11 is above average. Attainment in the sixth form is rising with an increasing proportion of students securing higher grades at GCE AS and A level.

You enjoy school life, including the excellent range of extra-curricular opportunities. This is evident in your high attendance. There is much good, and some outstanding, teaching in the school. In these lessons, you respond well to the teachers' high expectations. However, there remains some satisfactory teaching, including in the sixth form, where you are not sufficiently stretched. Sometimes you are inattentive in these lessons. Overall, your behaviour is good and relationships with teachers are warm and positive. You receive high quality care and support from teachers and support staff and you told us you feel very safe in school. Leaders, including governors, are ambitious for you. They form an effective team and, together, have steered the school with great commitment and courage through a difficult period. They worked with us to prioritise areas for improvement. Essentially, we have agreed that to improve teaching from good to outstanding, the most effective classroom practice needs to be systematically shared with middle leaders equally expert at driving improvements.

You can help your school to improve further by making the most of opportunities to lead learning in lessons and maintaining your focus on the pursuit of excellence so that you achieve your full potential in life.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline White
Her Majesty's Inspector

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