

Cardinal Griffin Catholic High School

Cardinal Way, Stafford Road, Cannock, WS11 4AW

Inspection dates 9–10 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- All groups of students are now achieving well. They make good progress because of the good teaching they receive. They are keen to do well and say that teachers make their learning fun.
- Teachers have high expectations of what their students can achieve and promote their independence well. Skilled questioning in most lessons provides a high level of challenge.
- Behaviour is exemplary both in lessons and around the school. Students are polite and courteous and say that the school keeps them very safe.
- The inspirational headteacher is well supported by his senior team and by the outstanding governing body. Leaders have taken robust action to eradicate inadequate teaching and have put in place thorough procedures to check on students' progress and on the quality of teaching.
- The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good and achievement is rising. Outstanding leadership ensures that students are offered courses that fully meet their needs and that they receive the care and guidance they need to succeed.
- This is a rapidly improving school with a strong capacity for further improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a small minority of lessons, the tasks that teachers plan do not fully match the range of abilities of their students, particularly those of highest ability, who are not always moved on to a more difficult task once they show understanding.
- Teachers do not sufficiently encourage students to respond to their advice when they mark their work or give them time in lessons to do so.
- Leaders have introduced several initiatives in response to the previous inspection report but there has not been sufficient time for their impact on students' achievement and well-being to be apparent.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 41 lessons, 13 of which were seen together with one of the school’s senior leaders. They also made a number of further short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with students, a parent, governors and staff, including subject leaders. A telephone conversation took place with the school’s local authority improvement partner.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at policies, the school’s own assessment of its strengths and weaknesses and its development planning, minutes of governing body meetings, records of lesson monitoring, information about students’ progress, safeguarding documents, and samples of students’ work.
- The views of 100 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account. Inspectors also took account of 44 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Mary Davis, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Janet Bird

Additional Inspector

Gwendoline Onyon

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Alan Jones

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average, as is the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages is below average. Very few students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is below the national average.
- At various times in the past, the school has used its links with the Cannock Pupil Referral Unit to cater for individual students and has arranged for others to receive home tuition. Currently, this applies only to a very small number of cases, details of which cannot be included here without the danger of identifying individual students.
- The majority of students are entered for mathematics GCSE during their final year.
- The school meets the current government floor standards for secondary schools, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school runs a breakfast club every morning.
- Some sixth form courses are provided in partnership with the Chase High School.
- Over the past two years there has been a significant turnover in staffing. Eighteen new teachers have taken up post over the last two academic years, mainly in mathematics and in science.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Use existing outstanding practice to make all teaching at least good and more outstanding by:
 - ensuring that teachers always plan to meet the different needs and abilities of all students within their classes, particularly those of highest ability, and move them on quickly with their learning once they show they have understood the initial learning points being taught
 - consistently checking that students respond to advice on how to improve when their work is marked, giving them time to do this in lessons and encouraging them to try another challenge once they have done so.
- Consolidate the recent innovations in management practice to ensure their full impact on students' achievement and well-being and ensure recent gains are sustained.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students typically enter the school with average levels standards in reading, writing, communication and mathematics. Over recent years the proportion of Year 11 students gaining 5 good GCSE passes including English and mathematics has been above average but in 2012 this pass rate fell, and in mathematics and science was below average. This was because of inadequate teaching in these two subjects that leaders have since taken robust action to eradicate. 2013 results showed a return to high levels of attainment in English and mathematics and attainment in science has improved strongly. Current assessments indicate that attainment is likely to rise further by the end of the current year.
- Leaders' robust tracking of students' progress across the school shows that the proportion making or exceeding expected rates of progress now compares well to national expectations in English and mathematics. Lesson observations during the inspection confirm that students enjoy their learning and are making good progress in all year groups. Students from all ethnic backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language are making similar rates of progress.
- Students achieve well in the sixth form. Results over the past three years show that attainment at advanced level has risen, with the proportion gaining the highest grades being consistently strong. There was also a significant improvement in attainment at AS level in 2013. The strong focus on developing independence enables students to take responsibility for their own progress. For example, in a Year 12 English lesson, students made outstanding progress as they explored together complex references in their set text, having been challenged through skilful questioning to think deeply about the issues raised.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are well supported and their progress is rigorously tracked. As a result, they are currently making similarly good progress to that of their classmates. Year 7 catch-up funding enables those with low literacy and numeracy skills to benefit from small group and individual support that is resulting in rapid progress for this group.
- Well-established strategies are in place to help to accelerate students' reading. A variety of catch-up courses and one-to-one tuition are provided for the weakest readers, establishing a systematic approach and providing effective support throughout Key Stage 3 and beyond. This results in these students making good progress in reading. Students show a love of reading and are frequently encouraged to read out loud across all subjects. Key words for learning are often displayed to promote students' technical vocabulary in each subject.
- Pupil premium funding is used appropriately on a wide range of strategies that focus on promoting study skills and providing the financial support to ensure that those facing challenging circumstances are fully included in enrichment activities, such as cycling and school trips. Funding for individual mathematics support has been particularly effective in promoting achievement in this subject.
- The attainment of students known to be eligible for free school meals has been below that achieved by this group nationally in English and mathematics, although this gap can now be seen to be closing. In 2013 the average GCSE grade of these students was half a grade behind their classmates in English, while in mathematics, the gap had closed. There remains a gap in the proportion of students making and exceeding expected progress, although it is less in mathematics than in English, as a result of the increased support for mathematics. The school's

current data for Years 7 to 11 show that the gap is rapidly closing for all ability levels.

- The very few students following alternative courses achieve well as a result of the well-matched support and care they receive.
- Students enjoy their learning and are keen to do well. They receive constant encouragement from adults, including teaching assistants, which increases their self-confidence and fosters students' very positive attitudes to learning.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching observed during the inspection was good and almost a quarter was outstanding. Leaders' rigorous checking on the quality of teaching shows that this is typically the case. There remains, however, a small proportion of teaching that still requires improvement.
- Sixth form students told inspectors that the teaching they receive is good and that they value the encouragement they receive. Observations confirmed this. In a Year 12 music lesson, students were observed making outstanding progress as a result of well-planned and varied tasks. These enabled students to gradually gain confidence when tackling a challenging task of describing the harmony and structure in an unfamiliar jazz extract. The teacher's expert subject knowledge ensured that students built their understanding and skills during the lesson and developed their independence by preparing support materials for each other.
- Leaders are establishing very effective assessment practice across the whole school. Although early in the term, students have a clear understanding of their targets and how well they are doing. They are frequently provided with the opportunity to assess each others' work and, as a consequence, have a detailed understanding of how they will be assessed and are able to build skills in identifying how to improve further.
- Teachers in all subjects promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, by providing opportunities for reflection on moral issues and for developing teamwork. In all lessons there is strong emphasis on group work to develop social skills and to share understanding, and students are frequently encouraged to support each other.
- In physical education lessons teachers place a strong focus on developing stamina and resilience and students rise willingly to the challenge of running the 'Griffin mile' before they begin their activity. In a Year 7 lesson, students who finished first were observed shouting encouragement to those who were lagging behind, ensuring that they never gave up.
- Teaching assistants are generally used well and provide good classroom support but also know when to stand back and enable students to try themselves.
- A minority of teachers do not plan tasks that sufficiently match the variety of individual abilities within their class, particularly the highest attainers. This results in these students occasionally finding the work too easy or having to wait while others finish a task.
- Although the marking of students' work is detailed and leaders have established the expectation that students will respond to this advice by trying a new challenge or practising a skill, students are not always given the time to reflect on this advice and not all teachers check that students have responded.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour in lessons is exemplary and in all lessons observed, students showed great enthusiasm for their learning and were keen to do well. They told inspectors that this is typically the case. Consequently, teachers do not need to manage behaviour, as there is an expectation throughout the whole school that students will respond quickly to instructions and will display highly positive attitudes. This creates an exceptionally positive climate for learning.
- Students are welcoming and polite and were keen to tell inspectors about their learning. They open doors and offer to show the way to visitors as a matter of course. There is evident mutual respect and warmth between adults and students.
- Students have a comprehensive awareness of different types of bullying, but say that this happens rarely and that adults deal with it quickly and effectively so that they feel safe and well-cared for. They told inspectors that there is zero tolerance of racism or homophobia because 'it shows a lack of respect'.
- The variety of opportunities to take responsible roles, through for example, house captains, prefects or through the school council, are appreciated by the students, who take their responsibilities in supporting younger students very seriously.
- Attendance rates in the main school and the sixth form are above average, are closely checked and support provided for students and their families facing challenging circumstances. The care, support and guidance staff work together as a cohesive team to ensure all are supported. Vertical tutor groups further contribute to the sense of community in the school where older students support younger ones.
- Teachers know the students well and ensure the school is one where they are cared for as individuals and where success is celebrated. Students express great pride in their school. Parents and carers and staff agree that students behave well and that the school keeps them safe.

The leadership and management are good

- The inspirational headteacher, together with his senior leaders and the governing body, have created a cohesive community where all are valued. The headteacher knows all his students by name and seeks them out to praise and encourage. Staff and governors comment on his dynamic leadership. All students and staff are aware of his extremely high expectations that they will give of their best.
- The school knows itself extremely well and, since the previous inspection, leaders have been relentless in addressing the main issues identified for improvement, in particular in driving up the quality of teaching. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated and robust procedures put in place for checking that it continues to improve. Training needs are quickly identified and teachers understand that they will be held responsible for the progress made by their students.
- Subject leaders and other staff with leadership responsibilities are similarly held to account and their capacity developed through training, for example, in ensuring consistency of practice when observing lessons. The learning and teaching group of middle leaders has been instrumental in promoting high quality practice, sharing ideas every week during staff briefings and in compulsory sessions after school where identified areas of weakness are addressed.

- Systems for tracking students' progress are now extremely thorough and leaders have established very robust procedures for analysing the performance of different groups of students, for addressing any identified under-achievement and providing closely matched support. Leaders ensure that there is no discrimination and equal opportunity for all. Many of these management systems are new and have yet to be fully embedded in order to have a full impact on sustaining students' achievement and well-being.
- The courses that students follow are well matched to their interests and are constantly reviewed to ensure that they to meet their individual needs. At Key Stage 3 the improving support for literacy and numeracy is having a positive impact on raising attainment. A wide variety of enrichment activities are provided that support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and promote their well-being, from sport to performing arts.
- The sixth form courses offer a wide range of subjects, including in partnership with another local school. The outstanding head of sixth form rigorously monitors the effectiveness of these courses and students' progress. She is quick to identify and address any areas of under-performance. The students are appreciative of the opportunities offered to them and the advice and guidance they receive. Students also have access to timely and independent advice and guidance, including in the sixth form, which supports students' next steps well. No students are currently not in education, employment or training.
- The school works well to engage parents and carers, for example through numerous opportunities to meet with staff and the school website. One parent told inspectors how much she appreciated the support provided for her children who have special educational needs, enabling them to achieve 'phenomenal success'. Parents and carers expressed a high degree of satisfaction in the school's work.
- All statutory and other safeguarding requirements are met in full.
- The local authority gives light touch support to the school's leaders, providing opportunities for leaders to share good practice with other local school leaders.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body are fully involved in checking on the school's work and take part in many school activities. They regularly challenge the headteacher and work closely with subject leaders. They contribute to the school's self-evaluation and know its strengths and areas for development well, including how to compare its performance with other schools nationally. They work closely with the headteacher in ensuring that systematic performance management processes mean salary progression is not automatic and has to be merited. They also have a good understanding of how the pupil premium funding is having an impact of the progress of this group of students.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	124468
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	427054

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	921
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	147
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janet Mellor
Headteacher	Michael Burrowes
Date of previous school inspection	3 October 2011
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