

# Cardinal Newman Catholic High School

Bridgewater Avenue, Latchford, Warrington, Cheshire, WA4 1RX

**Inspection dates** 3–4 December 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The governing body does not have an accurate enough view of students' achievement because it does not have a firm enough understanding of data, especially data relating to how well different groups of students achieve.
- The governing body does not have enough knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses to provide sufficient challenge and support to senior leaders' successful drive to make the school better.
- The governing body is not sufficiently involved in checking how effectively the school deploys its resources.

### The school has the following strengths

- Students achieve well. Attainment has risen in recent years as has the proportion of students making good progress in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is usually good with some that is outstanding. However, some teaching does not get the level of challenge right in lessons and the quality of marking is too variable.
- Pupils behave well and feel very safe in school.
- The Head of School, ably supported by a strong team of senior and middle leaders, has driven the school strongly forward in recent years.
- The recently appointed executive headteacher provides the school with a clear view of how successful the school and Federation can be.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 32 lessons taught by 31 teachers.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and managers, groups of students, the Chair of Governors together with three other members of the governing body, and two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation including: information on students' achievement; school records relating to the monitoring of teaching, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding; school policies; minutes of meetings of the governing body; the school's own summary of its effectiveness; and the school's development plan.
- Inspectors took account of 35 parental responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire) and questionnaires returned by members of staff.

## Inspection team

Stephen Wall, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kathleen Harris	Additional Inspector
Paul Rafferty	Additional Inspector
Andrew Henderson	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Cardinal Newman Catholic High School is smaller than most secondary schools nationally.
- The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is broadly average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below average. Few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is well-below average.
- The proportion of students supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- The school enters the most-able students for GCSE in mathematics at the end of Year 10. It enters students for GCSE English in November in Year 11.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards that set minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Cardinal Newman Catholic High School is in a hard federation with another, nearby secondary school, St Gregory's Catholic High School. The two schools share a common governing body. An executive headteacher leads both schools. Each school is also led and managed by a Head of School. The executive headteacher has been in post since April 2013 following the retirement of the previous incumbent.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve governance so that:
  - the governing body understands and uses data more effectively to gain awareness of how well students achieve, especially different groups of students
  - the governing body has a better understanding of what the school does well and where it could do better to provide more effective support and challenge for the school's leaders and managers
  - the governing body has a much firmer grasp on how the school uses resources.
- Improve teaching further so that more is outstanding by ensuring that:
  - teaching is always appropriately challenging for students of differing abilities
  - students are encouraged and have more opportunities to take more responsibility for their own learning
  - the quality of marking is consistent in showing students what they need to do to improve their work and insisting on neat and tidy presentation of work.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school with skills that are typically in line with those expected for their age.
- In recent years attainment has risen and is above average in the proportion of students who attain five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics.
- Attainment has risen across a broad range of other subjects.
- The proportion of students making the progress expected of them and the proportion doing better than this, given their starting points, is significantly above national figures in English. In mathematics, the proportion of students making the progress expected of them is significantly above the national figure and the proportion doing better than this matches the national figure.
- This represents good achievement. Inspection evidence from school data, lesson observations, discussions with students and analysis of students' work in their books shows that the upward trend is set to continue.
- The attainment of students who are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is above that of similar students nationally. In 2012 in English and mathematics, students known to be eligible for free school meals attained, on average, one GCSE grade lower than others. Data for 2013 show a similar picture. However, in 2013, a significant number of free schools meals students had severe emotional, family and attendance problems. Despite the school's best efforts to support these students, their challenging circumstances led them to underachieve. Data for free school meals students who did not have such barriers to learning show that the gap in attainment with other students closed significantly.
- The vast majority of students who are disabled or with special educational needs achieve well from their individual starting points. Their average attainment is above that of similar students nationally.
- The most-able students also achieve well. The proportion of students attaining the highest GCSE grades is above the national figure in English and matches the national figure in mathematics.
- The facts that all groups of students achieve well and that gaps in attainment are closing demonstrate the school's strong and successful commitment to providing equality of opportunity.
- The school enters students early for GCSE examinations with specific purpose. Those who do not attain their target grade are given extra support to improve and those who attain the highest grades embark on more advanced courses of study as preparation for post-16 studies.
- Students have good levels of skills in mathematics and literacy because both areas are taught and promoted well. However, the presentation of written work and the standard of students' handwriting are not always up to the mark and are too frequently left without comment when teachers mark students' work.
- The school uses Year 7 catch-up funding to provide targeted support for students who join the school with low skills in reading and mathematics. School data show that the majority of these students make rapid and secure progress in developing their basic skills.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is of good quality with some that is outstanding.
- Its quality has improved significantly in recent years because leaders and managers have stepped up their monitoring and have used the outcomes to tackle identified weaker aspects.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They form good relationships with the students in their classes.
- Most teaching sets appropriately challenging tasks for students of differing abilities and needs. However, sometimes students find the work that they are set too easy or too difficult. This slows progress in some lessons.
- Most teaching is purposeful and teachers plan their lessons well. Occasionally, however, teachers

hold centre stage too often and students spend too long listening when they are keen to get on with their own, independent learning. This results in some passivity towards learning.

- Where teaching is outstanding, students make excellent progress and thoroughly enjoy their learning. In a Year 11 German lesson, for example, exceptionally clear and well-planned teaching led students on a step-by-step approach to success by ratcheting up the level of challenge at various stages of the lesson. The teacher placed the onus on students to discover how to apply new vocabulary and grammar to produce work of the highest quality. Students rose avidly to the challenge and were eager to give of their best. The progress that they made was truly outstanding as was the work that they produced.
- Teaching assistants work effectively to provide support for students who find learning difficult. Teaching assistants are well-focused on the job in hand and have good impact on building students' levels of self-confidence.
- Most teachers mark students' written work regularly but the quality of their comments is variable in showing students what they need to do to improve. Too many students are not in the habit of presenting their work neatly or with pride. On too many occasions, marking accepts this without comment or insistence on improvement.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** is good

- Students say that they feel very safe in school. They say that, if they have a problem, they know to whom they should turn and are confident that help and support will be forthcoming.
- Students say, and school records confirm, that bullying of any form is rare and that they have confidence in adults to deal with it effectively and swiftly. Student counsellors are proud of the role they play in providing pastoral care and support for younger, more vulnerable students.
- Case studies show that the school is tireless in supporting the significant number of students who are vulnerable due to their circumstances. The care, guidance and support for students are comprehensive and of the highest order. Many of the most vulnerable students achieve success despite the challenges that life and circumstance present to them.
- Students are proud of their school. They respond maturely to the high standards that are set for their behaviour. They do not resent the school's strict imposition of rules because, as one student succinctly said: 'We want to work in an orderly school where we know what's acceptable and what's not. If we step out of line we expect to be punished and it's always done fairly.'
- Students have good awareness of what constitute potentially unsafe situations. They talk knowledgeably about the potential dangers of misusing the internet and social websites.
- In the majority of lessons students have positive attitudes towards learning. However, sometimes students would rather sit back and let the teacher do the work for them. Occasionally, attention wanes and there is chatter unrelated to the task in hand.
- Attendance is improving rapidly because the school promotes its importance effectively with parents and because systems to check on absence more rigorously are starting to bite. Attendance is now above average.
- The incidence of fixed-term exclusions has fallen in recent years. However, fixed-term exclusions are higher for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals than for others. Inspectors looked carefully at this and were satisfied that issuing fixed-term exclusions is done as a last resort and with scrupulous attention to fairness.
- The vast majority of parents are satisfied with the standard of behaviour in the school.

### **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- Although there is strong and effective leadership and management in the school at all levels, leadership and management require improvement because governance is not as strong or effective as it should be.

- Despite this weakness in governance, the Head of School, strongly supported by a team of very able and committed leaders and managers, has driven improvement at a rapid pace. The previous inspection acted as a 'wake-up call' to leaders and managers. As the Head of School put it succinctly: 'As a leadership team we decided it was time to take the bull by the horns.' This they have done with a sharp focus and with success. They have brought about rapid and secure improvement to students' achievement, the quality of teaching and the school's sense of purpose. They provide the school with strong capacity for continued success.
- The recently appointed executive headteacher has quickly identified the relative strengths of the school and where it could do better. He has set a clear agenda for further improvement, including an agenda to make governance more effective and purposeful. School leaders and staff appreciate and support the agenda for the future that he has set.
- Leaders and managers have an accurate view of what the school does well and where it could do better. They use the outcomes of accurate evaluation of the school's work to plan effectively for future success.
- To achieve improvement, leaders and managers have sharpened their use of data to track students' progress and hold staff more accountable for students' progress. Targets for students' attainment have been made more aspirational. Leaders and managers have made the monitoring of teaching and learning more regular and more rigorous; this has given them a much clearer picture of what needs to improve. They have followed it up with targeted training for staff that is paying dividends.
- The management of staff performance has been made more rigorous. There are now clear procedures linking the evaluation of staff performance more closely to students' progress and, in turn, to promotion up the salary scale.
- The curriculum is broad with a good range of option choices to meet the needs and abilities of students. The wide range of enrichment activities in sports, the arts and trips abroad are much appreciated by and popular with students. These opportunities, together with the strong moral values promoted by the school's strong Catholic ethos, ensure that students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.
- Senior staff say that in the past, partnerships with other schools, even with the federated partner school have not been promoted effectively. However, the executive headteacher is introducing closer cooperation between the schools as a central part of the improvement agenda.
- Procedures and policies for safeguarding students are fully in place and give no cause for concern.
- The majority of parents are supportive of the school.
- The local authority provides very limited support for this improving school.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is very committed to the school. They take their responsibilities to safeguarding students seriously and are effective in making sure that students are safe. The executive headteacher has introduced a range of measures to make governors more aware of their responsibilities and to help them be more effective. To this end, training by an external consultant has taken place and agendas for meetings of the governing body have been given a much sharper focus on school performance. However, governors' knowledge and understanding of how well the school is doing remain too limited. They do not demonstrate sufficient knowledge or understanding of performance data, especially data relating to the attainment and progress of different groups of students; they are therefore not well-equipped to hold the school rigorously to account. For example, they are able to state how pupil premium funding is allocated but do not know its impact. Governors' knowledge of how performance management operates is limited. In recent years governors have not been rigorous enough in checking on how the school uses the resources available to it, including finances. They are unclear about the state of the school's budget. Governors have not ensured that cooperation between the two federated schools has taken place with sufficient purpose.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	111456
<b>Local authority</b>	Warrington
<b>Inspection number</b>	426185

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	780
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Margaret Heelam
<b>Executive Headteacher</b>	David Lewis
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 November 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01925 635556
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