



# Cardinal Newman Catholic High School

## Inspection Report

---

**Unique Reference Number** 111456  
**Local Authority** Warrington  
**Inspection number** 288966  
**Inspection date** 4 October 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Leszek Iwaskow HMI

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Bridgewater Avenue
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Latchford, Warrington
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16		Cheshire WA4 1RX
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01925 635556
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	709	<b>Fax number</b>	01925 628600
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Richard Broadbent
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Vincent Love
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 October 2001		

---

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–16	4 October 2006	288966

---

---

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

Cardinal Newman is a smaller than average comprehensive school but the number of students on roll is rising. Attainment on entry is close to the national average and rising, although there are variations across year groups. The school draws its students from a wide catchment including both prosperous and disadvantaged areas of Warrington. There are few students from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The great majority of these students have moderate learning difficulties. The school is a specialist mathematics and computing college and has recently been awarded the Gold Artsmark by the Arts Council.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Cardinal Newman is a school which has much to be proud of and an exciting future to look forward to as new initiatives and the recently acquired mathematics and computing specialism begin to have an impact. It is a good and improving school. Most students achieve well, exam results are good, and students appreciate the efforts of their teachers. There is a real family feel to the school which students were keen to point out. Most students agree that this is a good school. As one youngster succinctly put it, 'This is a happy school where everyone knows each other. Teachers are firm but fair in lessons. They want you to work hard but also to enjoy school and they all know you too.'

The school is well led and the influx of new staff and improving facilities have created a buzz and raised expectations among both teachers and students. One parent captured this upbeat mood when she stated, 'My son had felt it wasn't cool to be clever, but seems to be OK now.' The students have noticed the improvements in teaching and learning which have occurred especially in the sharper organisation and planning of lessons. They especially enjoy the greater opportunities being offered for practical and group work, as well as better interaction with teachers. However, a few lessons are still too heavily teacher- directed. Marking and assessment remains areas which needs further development, particularly in involving students more in assessing how well they do and reflecting on what they can do better.

The improved facilities have helped to broaden the curriculum, especially in providing a greater range of sporting activities. However, there remain difficulties in delivering practical subjects in the short lesson time available and personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship are not delivered consistently well through the tutorial system. Students have very positive attitudes to learning and they also appreciate the good levels of care guidance and support they receive.

The school has identified that it must strengthen the skills and creativity of subject leaders if it is to continue to improve. The current monitoring of teaching and learning is excellent but needs to be extended to support curriculum development and innovation across all subject areas. The school is using the benefits of mathematics and technology status well, particularly in improving computer skills and in the increasing use of new technology in classrooms. The success of the mathematics department provides a good role model for other departments to follow.

The school provides good value for money and has a good capacity to improve because of honest self-evaluation and the determination to take action to make things better for students and staff. There is a shared vision of where the school is and where it wants to be and a collective desire to get there.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Support middle managers to enable them to develop their skills in managing their subject areas more creatively and effectively.

- Ensure that marking and assessment are consistently good across the school and enable students to reflect on their own learning.
- Review the timetable to ensure that sufficient time is made available to deliver all subjects effectively.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Over the last few years teachers, students and parents have all worked hard to raise performance. This collective effort has been rewarded by improving standards culminating in the best ever examination results this summer. Standards are now well above the national average. Most students are now making good progress in many subjects, building on the outstanding progress made in mathematics and English at Key Stage 3. This improvement reflects the positive impact of specialist status, the appointment of several new teachers and subject managers who have brought fresh vitality and ideas to their subjects, as well as a whole-school determination to enliven lessons with varied teaching approaches. Where weaknesses have been identified in subject areas these are being tackled. The result is that, overall, standards and achievement are now good.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Students' personal development and well-being are good. They are happy coming to school and they enjoy the majority of their lessons. Students make good progress in developing positive attitudes and values which reflect the Christian ethos of the school. They are well behaved in class and most are becoming personable and responsible young people who have a good sense of right and wrong. They respect each other and incidents of bullying are rare and dealt with promptly. They feel safe and secure as part of the whole school 'family'.

The school promotes healthy lifestyles well, although there is insufficient time to ensure that this is fully supported through the PSHE and citizenship programmes. The school council, having sorted out lunches, toilets and uniforms is becoming increasingly influential in playing its part in improving the learning environment around the school. The new 'state of the art' sports facilities have partly compensated for the insufficient time for physical education (PE) and increasingly good use is being made of these facilities after school.

Attendance is only satisfactory because a small minority of parents insist on taking their children on holiday in school time. This interrupts the continuity of their learning. Students' literacy and numeracy skills are improving and the school prepares them well for their working lives.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers know their subjects well and lessons are planned effectively and structured to meet the needs of all students, although inconsistencies in some lessons can lead to unevenness in students' rates of learning.

A key feature of the good teaching is the planning of a wide variety of activities which support students' different learning styles so that they enjoy what they are doing and make good progress. Students say that they particularly enjoy lessons which incorporate active, practical activities as well as opportunities for discussion and reflection, or 'thinking time'. They appreciate that teachers want them not only to work hard but to enjoy school life. The positive relationships within lessons and around school promote this well.

The majority of lessons move along at a brisk pace and teachers have high expectations of students' work and behaviour. Students know what is expected of them and usually rise to the challenge. They respond well to the school's increased and improved use of interactive whiteboards to enhance teachers' lesson presentations and their own involvement and motivation to learn.

The school is aware of the need to improve teaching still further in order to ensure that students make consistently good progress. In some lessons, where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, activities presented do not engage the students sufficiently and are too teacher directed. The level of challenge is not as well matched to students' abilities and questioning skills are not used well enough to extend their thinking and assess understanding. The school has recognised that these aspects of assessment to support learning require improvement, as does the quality of marking. Students are increasingly aware of what they must do to reach their target levels or grades but this is not yet consistent.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and continually evolving. The school acknowledges that provision could be better in PSHE and citizenship and that more time should be allocated for sport and PE. However, it compensates by providing other opportunities for the students. They benefit from the chance to study two languages and enjoy their time in the recently refurbished food technology room where they all have the opportunity to be introduced to the joys of cookery.

The recently introduced 'Values' programme encourages students to care for themselves and each other and helps boost their self-esteem. A new and diverse programme of enrichment opportunities is also being developed to engage and stretch gifted and talented students, but the full impact of this has yet to be seen. Equally, plans to expand the current limited work related curriculum are at an embryonic stage.

The school's Artsmark Gold Award recognises the quality and emphasis placed on performing arts which make a very positive contribution to the general curriculum and after-school activities. This is also reflected in students' enthusiasm for this area of work and their keenness to participate in school productions.

All students are encouraged to participate in the range of sporting, enrichment and additional study activities offered after school. An increasing number is taking advantage of this. The school is aware that many students have to use public transport to attend and funds extra buses for those students who wish to remain after school two nights a week.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Just as students care for the school, the school cares very well for its students. The pastoral system is seen as central to this provision and is currently being reviewed to include a greater involvement in tracking and monitoring students' progress. Transition arrangements and relationships with feeder primary schools are very good, with a well established induction programme in place to make young students feel at home when they first come to the school. As one parent stated, 'My child settled well and there were many visits prior to transfer so her move to high school was smooth.'

The 'Inclusion' programme, based around the social inclusion department, has won general praise and provides high quality support and a secure base for students in need, including disaffected or troubled youngsters. The enthusiastic manager provides a positive role model, relates well to these students and earns their trust. Older students benefit from the Prince's Trust programme which develops their self-esteem and their cooperative team and enterprise skills which enable them to develop a real sense of self-worth.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those speaking English as an additional language receive good support and are made to feel part of the school family. As one young Polish speaking pupil explained 'Czujemy sie dobrze - jak w domie' (we feel at home here). Students receive good care, guidance, support and advice whether for individual needs or future careers.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher, in a quiet and unassuming way, provides a good vision for the school and is managing change effectively. He knows his school well, with the result that it is making good and steady improvement. The very effective monitoring programme of teaching and learning has provided a good baseline for further improvements in the classroom. Students have noticed the changes and comment positively. One remarked that he would be 'hard pushed to suggest improvements, apart from the need to replace desks in the science labs'.

Management, teachers, governors and parents are working well together to continue to move the school forward. The mathematics and computing specialism is being used to good effect to improve standards. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school and appreciate the good levels of care and support given to their children. A minority of parents, however, consider that the school could do more to seek and take account of their views.

The new middle managers are taking to their tasks with enthusiasm and vigour but need focused support and encouragement to bring their ideas to fruition. The self-review process provides a good basis to guide senior managers in supporting and monitoring developments. Weaknesses exist in some planning documents and there is a wide variety in the quality of subject plans. There is a clear understanding of what still needs to be done and a clear idea of how to achieve this.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
---	-----------------------

### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I enjoyed visiting your school recently and would like to thank you for all your help. I was impressed with the warm and sincere way in which you made me feel welcome. You, your parents and your teachers have every right to be proud of your school because it is a good school which is getting better.

You clearly feel that things are improving both in the new facilities being added around your school and in class where the teachers are working hard to make your lessons more interesting. They are aware that you like lively practical lessons but equally you need to be responsible enough not to take advantage. The new assessment and marking system which has been outlined to you recently will be implemented rigorously and you will have more opportunities to reflect on your work and think about how you can make it even better.

Although you are not angels all of the time, you respect each other and behave well in

lessons. The delights of crisps, chocolate and chips may be appealing to you but I was impressed by the way that most of you have taken on board the messages for the need to eat and stay healthy. Most of you are strong enough to avoid temptation most of the time. More of you are also staying behind after school to participate in the many sporting and other activities the school offers - a clear case of healthy hearts and healthy minds.

There is a real 'buzz' around the school these days and as one mum stated, 'It is now cool to be clever.' I think this reflects the warm and vibrant atmosphere around your school - a place where you can work hard, play hard and enjoy yourselves.