

Newman Catholic School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112399
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	378484
Inspection dates	2–3 May 2012
Lead inspector	Shirley Gornall 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	571
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	36
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Shovlin
Headteacher	John McAuley
Date of previous school inspection	30 March 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Shirley Gornall
Charles Lowry
Julie McGrane

Her Majesty's Inspector
Ofsted Seconded
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 32 lessons taught by 32 teachers. They observed an assembly and a directed-reading session. Discussions were held with the school's leaders, staff, groups of students, two members of the governing body and a senior adviser from the local authority. Inspectors observed the work of the school and considered a variety of documents including the school improvement plan, self-evaluation document, monitoring reports and behaviour logs. Inspectors scrutinised 92 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, 130 from students and 47 from staff.

Information about the school

Newman Catholic School is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The number of students in the main school has increased steadily over recent years. A higher than average proportion of students is known to be eligible for free school meals. Most students are white British, with an average proportion from other ethnic backgrounds, mostly white European. A higher than average proportion of students is disabled or has special educational needs. The percentage of students leaving or joining the school at times other than the start or end of an academic year is higher than that seen nationally. The school achieved Engineering College status in September 2009. It has gained the Continuous Professional Development Mark and the Inclusion Charter Mark. The school's performance meets the government floor standards, which set minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The school is a member of the Carlisle Secondary Learning Consortium.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not yet good because teaching over time has not secured good progress in all subjects. The school is improving securely and has many positive features, including a vibrant engineering specialism and nurturing pastoral care. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Achievement is satisfactory. The proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE qualifications at grades A* to C has risen strongly and is above the national average. Weaker progress in mathematics has led to the proportion of students achieving five good GCSE qualifications, including English and mathematics, being below average. Progress in mathematics is improving and standards are rising.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall and improving. There has been considerable change in staffing and several teachers, including most of the mathematics department, have joined the school recently. Leadership through coaching has secured improvements in many aspects of teachers' practice. Inconsistency remains in the effectiveness of teachers' questioning, the level of intellectual challenge they pose for students, opportunities for students to develop their skills in working independently, and expectation of good written presentation.
- Behaviour is good and the school is very safe. Students' positive attitudes to learning are evident in most lessons. Relationships between students and staff are trusting and mutually supportive. Bullying is rare and few students are excluded from the school's harmonious community.
- Leadership is satisfactory. Leaders at all levels are ambitious for students' success and performance management is rigorous. Improvement planning is securely grounded in honest self-evaluation but sometimes lesson observations do not focus sharply on learning.
- The small sixth form is satisfactory. Students enjoy learning and make satisfactory progress. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and tailored to meet their needs.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sustain and build upon improvements in teaching so as to further accelerate progress and raise attainment across subjects, and particularly in mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that lessons build on students' previous learning and provide sufficient challenge
 - providing structured opportunities for students to work for longer periods of time without teacher intervention
 - ensuring that questioning deepens students' understanding
 - raising the standard of presentation of students' written work
 - embedding a consistent approach to the teaching of numeracy skills across the curriculum.

- Ensure that leaders at all levels evaluate the quality of teaching in terms of its impact on students' learning and achievement.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Students enter the school with attainment that is broadly similar to the national average in some year groups and significantly lower in others. They make satisfactory progress overall and achieve GCSE results which are similar to the national average in most subjects, but lower in mathematics, history and religious education. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE or equivalent qualifications at grades A* to C has risen steadily and is above the national average. Progress is best in technology and science subjects, reflecting the impact of the school's engineering specialism. Students' learning in lessons confirms that their progress in subjects that have been weaker is now accelerating, due to more accurate assessment, more consistent teaching and strengthened subject leadership. On the basis of examinations taken by students currently in the school, achievement in mathematics is showing strong improvement. Disabled students and those with special educational needs make similar progress to that of their peers. There is no significant difference in the achievement of students from different ethnic groups, or between boys and girls.

Students enjoy school and particularly relish opportunities to work collaboratively, solve problems and apply their learning in real-life contexts. Their most memorable learning experiences are often in science, engineering and technology where they engage in stimulating projects, both in lessons and during extra-curricular activities. They are less enthusiastic when they are required to listen for too long in lessons or when activities lack variety. Students demonstrate good social skills when they are given opportunities to work co-operatively. In some lessons, they are too dependent on teachers providing answers before they have exhausted other strategies. Most students speak confidently and enjoy using their well-developed information and communication technology (ICT) skills. They are able to read to locate information, and for pleasure. Their writing is generally adequately detailed but too many students have poor presentation skills and insufficient attention is paid to correcting basic errors.

Students enter the sixth form with attainment that is significantly lower than the national average. They make satisfactory progress in most subjects and particularly strong progress in sociology. The sixth form is an integral part of the school. It prepares students effectively for the next stage in their education, employment or training.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is satisfactory overall, with an increasing amount that is good and a small proportion that is outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge and establish very positive relationships with their classes. In the best lessons, teachers communicate high expectations and provide insightful feedback to accelerate achievement. They provide an interesting range of activities that maintain student engagement. In an outstanding English lesson, the teacher captivated students with a piece of his own writing that provided an excellent basis for discussing authorial techniques and intentions. This discussion provided a springboard from which students collaborated in the creation of some moving and original poetry of their own. The best teaching encourages students to make connections in their learning, as was the case in a highly successful art lesson where the teacher's questioning enabled students to extend their analytical skills and annotate their own work insightfully. Most teachers mark students' work regularly and provide clear advice on the steps they should take to improve it. Students do not, however, routinely check on and apply their teachers' comments and this limits the effectiveness of some of the feedback they receive. The teaching of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs is satisfactory. Teaching assistants provide effective support that improves students' understanding, although they do not always equip students to develop independence.

Where lessons are satisfactory, teachers do not fully engage with what students already know and understand, and this limits progress. In some cases, there is too much input and direction from the teacher and this reduces opportunities for students to be fully challenged or to work for extended periods without the teacher's intervention. There is an inconsistent approach with regard to expectations of presentation in students' exercise books therefore, too much work is untidy or unfinished. Approaches to developing consistency in teaching literacy across the curriculum are becoming embedded. The school has recently invested significantly in resources to strengthen students' reading comprehension skills; as yet it is too early to gauge the impact of this development. Strategies to promote numeracy in different contexts are under-developed. Teachers' reports to parents and carers are generally useful and detailed but on occasions are too general to assist them in supporting their children's learning.

Teachers successfully encourage students' engagement with ethical and moral issues, for instance through a well-informed discussion about crime and punishment in a history lesson. Arts subjects promote cultural understanding well, exemplified in students' enthusiastic production of samba music.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most students are courteous, sensible and respectful of their teachers and each other. They value the school's 'Do It Right' behaviour code, which the student parliament has had a key role in developing. Students consider incidents of bullying to be very rare. Incident logs confirm this view and indicate that they are dealt with effectively and quickly. The school is proactive in discussing different forms of bullying with students, during tutorials and in religious education and ICT lessons. Pastoral care is a strength of the school. Students are

confident that there are members of staff that they can turn to whenever they are in difficulty; many spoke warmly of the 'family' ethos of the school. Younger students feel very well supported by the school's transition programme that helps them to settle when they join Newman from a wide range of primary schools. Students know how to keep themselves safe and healthy and take responsibility for their own actions.

Most parents and carers agree that behaviour at the school is good. A few feel that lessons in the lower school are sometimes disrupted by poor behaviour. Inspectors took particular note of this view in scrutinising behaviour records, observing lessons and speaking with staff and students. They found that very few lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour and that, when disruption occurs, it is dealt with swiftly. The level of fixed-term exclusions from the school has decreased in response to assiduous monitoring and effective intervention with individual students and their families.

Students' attendance is similar to the national average and rising. Very few students are persistently absent from the school. The school's processes for monitoring and improving attendance are secure and effective.

Leadership and management

There has been significant staffing turnover since the previous inspection; this has now stabilised. The roles of senior leaders have been reconfigured in order to build capacity, strengthen teaching, ensure accountability through performance management and accelerate students' progress. These changes are having a positive impact and achievement is rising. The morale of the school community is high and there is an affirmative consensus among staff about the school's areas for improvement and the strategies that are in place to implement them. The headteacher provides principled leadership. He is supported by an able and conscientious senior team who have an accurate understanding of the school's context and a firm commitment to securing improvement in all aspects of the school's work. The school's self-evaluation is honest and accurate. A rigorous programme has been established to support teachers' continuing professional development; this includes a successful coaching programme that is leading to greater consistency in practice. Teachers who are respected practitioners have been seconded on to the senior leadership team to drive improvement. On occasions, lesson observations have focused on the practice of teachers rather than its impact on students' achievement. The school recognises this issue and is redressing the balance.

The curriculum has been reviewed and improved; this has had a positive impact on students' motivation. Students enjoy the wide-ranging extra-curricular programme offered by the school. The Governing Body provides effective support to the headteacher. The individual talents and experiences of governors are recognised and used, for instance in developing effective transition practice between the school and its partner primary schools. Safeguarding is given a high priority and the school's policy and practice meets requirements.

Leadership of the sixth form has been strengthened. Due to its small size, the school is unable to offer a full range of courses to sixth-form students. Objective information, advice and guidance are given to students regarding their choices of pathways and providers.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is promoted effectively. Students enjoy numerous opportunities to contribute to their school and the wider community.

Learning leaders in sports and arts subjects willingly take responsibility and show good organisational skills. Sixth-form reading mentors work effectively with younger students. The school raises money enthusiastically for charities, including through the sale of a cookery book compiled by the Newman School Parliament and sold to raise money for the local hospice. Assemblies provide opportunities for reflection on moral themes and a spiritual development group has been established to evaluate and further develop the school's mission. The school's policies promote equality. Staff and students respect each other's differences and ensure that discrimination in any form is not tolerated.

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 up 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.



4 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Newman Catholic School, Carlisle, CA1 1NA

Thank you for the help that you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We are particularly grateful to those of you who gave up your time to meet with us and those who completed the questionnaire. Thanks also to the Newman School Parliament for the insights you provided on the school's fund-raising and the new uniform design. We have judged Newman Catholic School to be satisfactory and improving. Most of you achieve satisfactory standards and it is clear that your progress is accelerating because, as you told us, the quality of teaching is improving.

We agree with you that your behaviour is good. We found most of you to be every courteous and supportive of each other and the staff. Congratulations on your improving attendance and on the extra work many of you are doing to ensure that your school goes from strength to strength; we were particularly impressed with the leadership opportunities that sixth-formers and students in the main school take on very readily.

We have asked the school to do several things to ensure that your achievement continues to improve. First, we have asked teachers and school leaders to raise standards further, especially in mathematics. Second, we have asked that the school's drive to improve teaching should be continued so that all teachers challenge you sufficiently, give you more opportunities to work independently, ask probing questions to deepen your thinking and pay more attention to helping you improve the presentation of your written work.

We are very confident that you will support your school fully and help it to improve further. We wish you every success in your education and your future lives.

Yours sincerely,

Shirley Gornall
Her Majesty's Inspector

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