

Newman Catholic School

Lismore Place, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA1 1NA

Inspection dates 27–28 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The literacy skills of students are not always well developed across all subjects. Errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation are not always identified in a timely fashion. This leads to errors being repeated and some students lacking fluency in their writing.
- The most-able students in the school are not always challenged to do their best in lessons. The school's previous policy of entering students early for GCSE mathematics examinations meant that some students who had the potential of gaining higher grades were entered for the foundation paper in the first instance and consequently did not attain as well as they could have done.
- School leaders have not always been rigorous enough in checking on the quality of teaching or the impact of actions taken to bring about improvements. The records of leaders, including information provided to governors, do not always focus on the difference being made to the learning of students. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning across the school and within subjects is inconsistent.
- The marking of students' work does not routinely check to see whether or not students are making improvements in their learning. The school's agreed policy for marking is not being applied consistently.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders are closing the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged students and their peers.
- Students behave well and are a credit to the school. They are smart in their appearance.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is promoted well. Students demonstrate a good understanding of British values of tolerance and respect, for example.
- Leaders and governors have good arrangements in place to keep students safe. Vulnerable students are helped to achieve and develop at least as well as their peers do.
- There is some outstanding teaching and learning, most notably in art.
- The sixth form has improved. More current students are making better progress than in the past. Students who completed their studies in 2014 have all gone on to university, college or employment.
- The headteacher's ambition is clear. All staff who responded to Ofsted's survey stated they were proud to work at the school.
- Parents express confidence in the school. All who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) agreed they would recommend the school to other parents.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed the school at work, including in lessons and at breaks and lunchtimes. They scrutinised a range of documentation and met with the headteacher and members of the leadership team.
- Discussions were held with 30 students representing all year groups throughout the school, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of Cumbria local authority, and a representative of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lancaster.
- Inspectors observed the teaching and learning in the lessons taught by teachers and assistants. They spoke with students, looked at the information about the progress of students within the classes, and examined work in books completed over time. Approximately one-third of this inspection activity was conducted jointly with members of the school's leadership team.
- Inspectors also took into account the 40 responses received from parents on Parent View and the 29 responses received from staff to Ofsted's survey.

Inspection team

Mark Williams, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Naomi Taylor

Additional Inspector

Bernard Robinson

Additional Inspector

Michele Costello

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Newman Catholic School is a smaller than average-sized school; however, the number of students on roll is rising.
- The school's sixth form is smaller than average. It too has a rising roll.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students who are eligible for funding through the pupil premium is above average compared to other secondary schools in England. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is broadly average.
- The large majority of students are of White British heritage.
- The school is part of the Carlisle Secondary Learning Consortium.
- A review of how the school is making use of the pupil premium funding is being undertaken by the headteacher of Our Lady's Catholic High School, Preston.
- The school did not meet the government's current floor standards for 2014. These are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the rates of progress made by students in their learning through routinely good or better teaching by:
 - ensuring that literacy skills are promoted and developed across all subjects so that students are accurate and fluent in their use of spelling, grammar and punctuation
 - ensuring that marking undertaken by adults, in line with the school's policy and best practice, routinely checks to see whether or not students are making improvements in their learning
 - providing greater levels of challenge to the most-able students.
- Strengthen leadership across the school by ensuring that:
 - records of checking on teaching quality and actions undertaken focus on the difference being made to students' learning and that this impact is routinely reported to the governing body.

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

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management **requires improvement**

- Leadership and management are not good because, despite important and correct actions taken, leaders have not always been rigorous enough in checking on the quality of teaching or the impact of actions taken. As a result, they cannot always identify quickly enough where weaknesses are present in order to act upon them. Leaders' records, including information provided to governors, do not always focus on the difference being made to the learning of students. An example of this is the review of the school's marking policy. The review reported that marking was good or outstanding in quality. Inspectors, however, including in joint scrutinies of work with school leaders, found considerable inconsistency in quality, with little that was outstanding. This was because leaders were focusing on whether marking was happening rather than whether or not it was making a difference to students' knowledge, skills and understanding in a particular subject. Likewise, observations of the quality of teaching - do not focus sharply enough on the gains made by students. As a consequence, the quality of teaching and learning across the school and within subjects is inconsistent.
- Despite these weaknesses, stronger aspects of leadership stand proud. Leaders have ensured that the school is a calm, orderly place where students behave well. The headteacher has made clear his ambition that standards should rise. He has made some difficult decisions regarding underperformance of staff and has ensured that progression up the pay scale is on merit alone. His vision is shared, as demonstrated by all staff responding to Ofsted's survey stating their pride at working at this school. Likewise, the leadership of vulnerable students is successfully helping such students achieve and develop at least as well as their peers do. Furthermore, leaders of the sixth form are ensuring that current students are making better progress than that seen in the past.
- Middle leadership is developing well. In mathematics, for example, leaders have taken action to aid students' use of mathematics across the curriculum. In English and science, leaders have taken steps to provide courses that allow students to achieve well. In all three subjects, work has been undertaken to close the gap between the performance of disadvantaged students and that of their peers and to cater more for the needs of the most able, such as through the reorganisation of setting arrangements. Leaders in these subjects recognise, however, that they need to measure the impact of their actions in terms of the difference they are making to students' learning.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, although the promotion of literacy, while planned for, is not always executed consistently. A good range of extra-curricular activity is offered and this is valued by students. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. This is demonstrated not only in students' good behaviour, but also in their understanding of British values, including tolerance and respect. Consequently, students are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- Students benefit from helpful guidance and support from transition from primary school to making choices about sixth form or employment. Leaders' commitment to being inclusive is evidenced by the higher-than-national proportion of disadvantaged students going on to study in the sixth form.
- Both the diocese and local authority meet with leaders to offer guidance, challenge and support. Both have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. External support and challenge, such as that to help leaders review their effectiveness in using the pupil premium funding, is helping the school to close gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged students and that of their peers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors, like staff, are clearly committed to the school and its students, not least because of the numerous challenges the school has faced over the years. They have, for example, ensured that the school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements.
 - Governors recognise clearly the strengths of the school and the weaknesses that remain. Minutes of their meetings show they ask leaders questions so they can support and challenge the school. The information they receive, however, as recorded in minutes, focuses on actions taken rather than the difference being made to the learning of students.
 - Quite correctly, governors have seen the potential offered to them to support and challenge leaders further through scrutinies of pupils' work and taking a greater role in self-evaluation.

The behaviour and safety of pupils **are good**

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good.

- Students are a credit to the school. They are polite, courteous and dress smartly. They move around school in a calm, orderly fashion. They know bullying of any kind is unacceptable; as a result, such incidents are uncommon. Parents and staff responding to inspection questionnaires were unanimous in their view that pupils behave well.
- On occasions, low-level chatter disrupts learning. This is usually the result of teaching that does not demand high enough expectations of what students are to do and learn. In these circumstances a word from an adult is usually sufficient to gain students' full attention.
- Students make a good contribution to school life. The Student Parliament, for example, was instrumental in the design of the school's uniform. Students also have a good understanding of British values, including tolerance and respect. They display a good understanding of other faiths and cultures. As stated by one student, they appreciate that everyone has the right to have opinions and to value those who are different.
- The attendance of students, including those who are disadvantaged, while below average, is improving well. Furthermore, there has been a decline in the proportion of students who are persistently absent.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- All parents responding to the inspection questionnaire were confident that the school keeps their children safe. Students who met with inspectors were overwhelmingly of the view that this was the case. Year 8 and 9 students, for example, talked confidently about how to use the Internet safely and responsibly.
- Pastoral support for students, especially those who are vulnerable, is strong. For such students, support begins in primary school. This enables students to transfer into Year 7 with confidence. There is good, clear liaison with external agencies. The result is that vulnerable students are helped to achieve and develop at least as well as their peers do.
- Records are kept of the rare occasions when racist or homophobic language is used in order to make sure there are no repeat victims or offenders. These records, however, while most helpful, do not always indicate that the school has spoken to parents to make them aware of incidents.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Three factors prevent teaching from being routinely good to enable students to make best progress in their learning: inconsistency in the promotion of good standards of literacy; marking that does not routinely check that students are making progress; and the most-able students not always being challenged to do their best. Together, the three factors mean the quality of teaching is variable across the school and within subjects.
- Errors in students' use of spelling, grammar and punctuation are not always identified in a timely fashion. This means students do not always spell correctly common and key words in different subjects. On other occasions, students' written work lacks meaning and fluency because the work given to help them improve offers the potential of making things worse. For example, while students are encouraged to use adverbs, conjunctions and prefixes, and indeed can talk about these features well, what is asked of them is too simple; for example, cutting out strips of paper to make sentences that, on completion, contain errant capital letters and full stops.
- Work in students' books shows that the school's agreed policy for marking is not being followed consistently by all staff. This means that marking does not routinely check to see whether or not students are making improvements. For example, while some teachers point out to students ways to improve learning, others are not. Likewise, some teachers mark work very regularly, while others are not clear how regularly they are meant to mark books. This means that some students learn very well at a swift rate, while others repeat errors made earlier in the year.
- The challenge provided for the most-able students to do their best is again variable. Questions asked by teachers and activities set do not always help these students think more deeply about what they are learning.
- There are, however, strengths in teaching which leaders can build on. Outstanding teaching leading to equally high quality progress and attitudes to learning was observed in the art department. In one lesson, for example, students of all abilities, and those who are disadvantaged, were engaged by the teacher's questioning which helped them to evaluate the strengths in their own work and what needed to be done to improve. Work completed since September showed this level of quality to be typical. Marking was regular and focused on supporting students' improvements. While errors in spelling were noted, the teacher had acted promptly and improvements had been brought about. Inspectors agree with the

teacher's assessment that Grade A* was well within the reach of these students.

- Other examples of good learning and progress included the experience of Year 10 students in history where, over time, students had become increasingly confident in offering explanations of their thinking about why the construction industry in the USA in the 1920s went through a period of growth.
- Work is under way to promote students' use of mathematics across the curriculum. Teachers make use of displays showing mathematical vocabulary. On joining the school in September, Year 7 pupils were provided with lists of such vocabulary and information relating to calculations to help them take the step from primary to secondary education.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students in the school currently, with the exception of the current Year 10, entered the school with prior attainment significantly below average. The same was true for the Year 11 students who took their GCSEs in 2014.
- Published data shows that in 2014, GCSE results declined markedly from the previous year's high. Taking only students' first entries into account, the figure gaining 5 grades A*-C, including English and mathematics, fell to 33 percent. When accounting for students' best entry (multiple entries to improve their grades), this figure rose to 48 percent.
- Leaders' policy of promoting multiple entries – a policy no longer in operation – has proved to be a two-edged sword. On the one hand, students at risk of not achieving a grade C in mathematics in the main reached this important mark that enabled them to go on to the next stage of education or employment; on the other hand, entering students who had the potential of attaining a grade A or B into the foundation paper on the first entry explains why the school's progress measures in mathematics were lower than for other subjects. However, 28 students who had initially taken the foundation paper went on to take the higher paper and achieved a B grade or better in the summer of 2014. In English, the impact was less marked: the published data show there was only a three percent difference in the first and best entry scores.
- There is variability in the achievement of the most-able pupils. In lessons where they are challenged to do their best, they make good progress through thinking deeply about a problem because of the teacher's questioning or by phrasing a response in their own words, for example. Sometimes, however, teachers do not ask students challenging enough questions or do not have high enough expectations of what they can do. As a result, progress is made, but it is not as good as it could be.
- Vulnerable students, those with special educational needs for example, because of targeted support, are making progress in their academic achievement and personal development at least in line with that of their peers. Furthermore, gaps are closing between disadvantaged students currently at the school and their peers. This welcome improvement is the result of increasingly effective use of pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding (government funding for those entering secondary school with below average standards in English and mathematics). It also represents an improvement on the published data for last year's Year 11 who left in 2014. In this cohort, based on first entries in English, disadvantaged students were one-and-a-half grades behind both non-disadvantaged peers nationally and in school. In mathematics, they were also one-and-a-half grades behind in school, but nearly two-and-a-half grades behind nationally.
- Students are performing well in a number of subjects across the school; good achievement is apparent in art and design, construction, resistant materials, geography and information technology. In geography and information technology, the percentage of students attaining a grade A or B was significantly higher than the national average.
- On the whole, across the curriculum, students are acquiring subject knowledge well. However, they are sometimes let down by slips not being corrected. In mathematics, for example, students' incorrect recording of area as centimetres rather than centimetres squared is not always spotted and acted on by teachers in a timely enough fashion. Likewise, students' developing subject knowledge is sometimes negated by them not being prompted to record responses in clear, well-written sentences. This means that students potentially will lose marks in written examinations. Reading, however, is being promoted through a range of materials and targeted support; for example, older students listen to younger ones.

The sixth form provision

is good

- The sixth form provision has improved since the inspection of November 2013.
- Numbers are rising; however, they are still small and this makes valid comparisons with national figures

and statistics unreliable. In 2014, all students went on to university, college or employment. Good leadership of the sixth form has ensured that teaching is predominantly good and close checks are made on students. As a result, currently more students are making good progress than in the past, particularly given their generally below-average starting points.

- Students who spoke with inspectors value the support they are given to help them succeed on their courses and, indeed, in choosing the right courses to follow. Equally valued are the careers advice and guidance offered. Students represent the school well as strong ambassadors. They behave well and are kept safe. Inspectors judge that sixth form students attend well. While attendance rates appear below average, because of small numbers, the legitimate absence of one student can distort the true picture.
- Students' enjoyment of sixth form life is reflected in the opportunities they take to enhance their personal development as well as their academic or vocational achievements. A number, for example, help younger students in their reading. Others help with assemblies, sports leader coaching or offer support in lessons such as information technology.

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	112399
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	453720

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	612
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	52
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Shovlin
Headteacher	John McAuley
Date of previous school inspection	19 November 2013
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