



Newman Catholic School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112399
Local Authority Cumbria
Inspection number 299853
Inspection dates 17–18 January 2007
Reporting inspector Martin Bradley HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Lismore Place
School category	Voluntary aided		Carlisle, Cumbria
Age range of pupils	11–18		CA1 1NA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01228 607470
Number on roll (school)	532	Fax number	01228 607472
Number on roll (6th form)	76		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr John Caven
		Headteacher	Mr John McAuley
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2004		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	17–18 January 2007	299853

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Newman Catholic School was last inspected in November 2004 and was put into special measures. Since that inspection, student numbers have fallen by about 100 to 532 and about a third of the teaching staff have changed. In January 2005 the school was flooded and subsequently worked on three sites, with Years 7 to 10 working part time for six weeks. The school premises were fully reoccupied in September 2006. The students are predominantly of White ethnicity. They come from up to 25 primary schools, although the majority have attended three Catholic primary schools. Attainment on entry is significantly below the national average and 36% of students are identified as having additional learning needs and difficulties and 19% of students take a free school meal. Just over half of the students stay for the sixth form, although a significant proportion of these resit GCSEs and then leave after one year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

The issues identified following the last inspection have all been addressed, although changes designed to raise standards have yet to have a full impact. There has been particularly good progress during recent months towards addressing the key issues of management and standards. Currently Newman provides a satisfactory and improving standard of education for its pupils. They are well cared for and feel safe in school. Their attendance is improving and this is contributing to the rising standards in the school. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Nevertheless, the pupils' learning is only satisfactory. Those whose attendance is good are successfully working towards the challenging targets set for them. Some students lack confidence in their own abilities and this reflects their limited study skills and frequently low levels of literacy. Good leadership and management is now providing clear direction for the school which is well placed to improve further.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory. It is well managed and in the last six months many strategies have been put in place to improve its efficiency. Students have a very positive attitude. They particularly appreciate the opportunities to contribute to the life of the school in the school parliament, helping younger students in tutor time and arranging charitable and fundraising events. Students are well supported both in their transition from main school and in the way they are guided to progress to employment or higher education. The local federation of school sixth forms ensures that all students' curriculum needs can be met in Newman or by attending a course at another school or college.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards further at all key stages.
- Ensure that all staff implement fully the target-setting and monitoring systems consistently.
- Promote students' study skills; and
- ensure that all students are aware of their targets and know what they need to do to meet them.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Overall, achievement and standards throughout the school improved slightly in 2006, but remained at a significantly low level. This reflected the upheavals experienced by the school following the flood and whilst working on split sites. Since last September the school has implemented much more robust and reliable systems for tracking pupils' progress and identifying those at risk of underachievement much earlier. Evidence from the inspection, from monitoring by the local authority (LA) and from the school's own reviews all indicate that achievement and standards are rising and that the majority of students are on track to meet the targets which they were set earlier this year. Already this has gone a considerable way towards addressing the issues of low standards by the end of Year 9 and in GCSE, as well as unsatisfactory achievement for some students in Years 7 to 11. Parents spoke positively about receiving reports on students' progress during the autumn term, a process which is to be repeated twice during the school year. Achievement is now satisfactory.

Key Stage 3 test results in 2006 were much lower than those found nationally, although an average proportion of students achieved the higher levels. During the inspection, no lessons in Key Stage 3 and 4 showed inadequate achievement, although some students' limited study skills and poor concentration affected their work and too often achievement was limited by the legacy of weaknesses in literacy. While about a third of students recently admitted to the school have low levels of literacy skills, the school nevertheless offers an appropriate range of interventions to address these weaknesses and these students are making satisfactory gains in their basic skills.

Standards and achievement at the end of KS4 in the summer 2006 were inadequate. The current data suggests that 85% of the present Year 11 pupils are making satisfactory progress against targets set for them. This supports the generally upward trend in standards by the end of Key Stage 4 since the school became subject to special measures, and moves it closer towards national expectations. Where data analysis has identified underachieving students, support is being given in areas of weakness. The great majority of Year 10 students are realistically expected to achieve their targets and are therefore making satisfactory progress in their learning.

Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory, despite a drop in overall standards in 2006. Most students are progressing towards their targets, but a minority is achieving well below average. The newly introduced system for tracking progress supports their work and ensures that any concerns over achievement are quickly addressed. It ensures that students know how well they are performing and how to improve their skills and attainment.

One third of the school's population is on the special educational needs register. The number of students with a statement of special educational needs is much higher than the national average, due in part to the school's success as an inclusive school. Their personal programmes are implemented successfully and their progress is carefully monitored. A range of specialist support is provided to meet these students' needs

and good liaison with external agencies contributes very effectively to their progress and personal development.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Assemblies and tutor group time give good opportunities for worship and reflection. A wide range of extra-curricular activities develop social skills and some of the themes of the citizenship programme allow consideration of moral and ethical issues, such as the present theme of Fair Trade and its impact on Third World producers. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Students show respect for each other and listen well to each other's contribution in class. Low level disruption does occur occasionally but is dealt with quickly. Attendance is satisfactory. The school's strategies for improvement have raised overall attendance rates, although there remain issues regarding a small number of long-term school refusers and Travelling families who are thought to have moved elsewhere. Attendance monitoring procedures are robust and effective. With the support of the LA, arrangements for monitoring provision for students educated off-site are now robust.

Students conduct themselves well in class, but the limited study skills of a significant minority of students restricts their enjoyment of learning and makes them at best passive. Students are aware of safety issues in school. They report that bullying is not an issue. However, a few parents noted that their children had experienced bullying, especially when joining Year 7, and most of these felt that they had not been sufficiently informed of what had been done to address their concerns. Physical education is an entitlement throughout the school and the school parliament has been instrumental in promoting healthy eating. It has been particularly effective in contributing to the rewards policy. Contribution to the community is a particularly strong feature of the school. Parents and the community are involved in school functions, and the sixth form are particularly involved in helping their younger peers with reading difficulties and as sports leaders. Skills necessary for economic well-being are promoted in lessons, but the school is at an early stage of organising work-related learning and is in the process of reforming its work experience programme. There is a considerable take-up of sporting activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching in the lessons seen was good: this represents a significant improvement since the last inspection where it was reported as being unsatisfactory.

Systems to monitor teaching, backed up by continuing professional development are effective and targeted well to meet identified staff and school needs. The best lessons seen were well paced with varied activities which ensured that the students' interest was sustained.

Overall, most students are making satisfactory progress. In most lessons and in students' exercise books and the recently introduced planners there is evidence of clear targets being set for all subjects. In a minority of subjects the targets were not so apparent and students were less clear about them. The targets are being effectively linked to regular assessments and the school has rightly identified the need to modify the system to ensure that assessments are in similar forms where possible. Many students know their targets and sixth form students can often provide their A-level Performance System (ALPs) targets. Teaching does not always meet the range of needs in the class, especially for the more able and those who find the work difficult. The limited differentiation does not always provide students with the chance to take responsibility for their own learning. The quality of learning is satisfactory overall. Improvement here lags behind the improvement in the quality of teaching. Behaviour in lessons is generally good, although a number of parents reported that in mixed ability classes some students distracted others. A significant minority of students have poor concentration and study skills; this can lead to low level disruption in lessons and inadequate progress. Such students have limited aspirations and often lack awareness of how to improve their work. Teaching support assistants are generally well deployed.

Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good. Teachers involve students well in the lessons and allow plenty of scope for developing organisation and examination skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and improving. Statutory requirements are met fully. New courses have been introduced at Key Stage 4 over the past 18 months, for example vocational GCSE's. These have provided more choice of subjects, a broader range of accreditation and more varied approaches to teaching and learning. They are proving popular with students. In addition to GCSE, students can achieve Entry Level certificates in English, mathematics and NVQ Level 1 on college courses. Appropriate steps have been taken to ensure that the students are studying citizenship and personal, social and health education at all key stages. The school is aware that the time allocated for this work is limited and is identifying how aspects of the programme can be taught through other subjects, for example in religious education. Improvements have been made to the arrangements for work experience in Year 10. The school is at an early stage in establishing a broader work-related learning programme for all students. It is currently conducting an audit of how this may be achieved across all subjects. The school has well-established links with the local college of further education through which a small number of students study vocational courses. Many of those who leave school at age 16 move on to full time courses at the college. Students who stay on

into the sixth form can choose to study further GCSE subjects or to resit those in which they wish to improve their grades. A broad range of essentially academic subjects can be studied at AS level and A level at Newman and the curriculum is widened through access to courses, some of which are vocational, taking place at other schools within the local sixth form federation.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The newly introduced assessment and tracking system is enabling more rigorous monitoring of students' progress linked to challenging targets. It is backed up by an effective student progress team which identifies and intervenes with students causing concern either for academic reasons or other more personal reasons. Students have the opportunity to discuss their progress with their tutor and contribute to the setting of their targets. The support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities is good, enabling them to make satisfactory progress towards their recently established targets. Risk assessments are effective. Child protection measures are good and meet statutory requirements. There are two named persons in charge, and all records of personnel are full and up-to-date. There is good liaison with parents and other agencies. Vulnerable students are well supported by an effective student support team which provides confidentiality. The environment has been refurbished and re-equipped after the flooding and does not present any health and safety issues.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school has undergone significant changes since the last inspection. Whilst many staffing and management issues were effectively addressed in the 18 months following the inspection, the pace of change was frequently relatively slow. The key issues of raising standards and assessing students' progress were not addressed with enough rigour to enable the school to demonstrate its capacity to improve in these crucial respects. However, during the last six months major strides have been made towards dealing with these issues and basic frameworks for assessment and target-setting have been effectively established. They promote the personal development and well-being of learners. The senior leadership team has been expanded and is effective. The acting headteacher has received good support from the associate headteacher, a deputy headteacher from another school through the Leading Edge Partnership and officers of the LA and their consultants. This support has been well used to increase staff awareness and skills in assessment and target-setting. Many of these processes are becoming well embedded in the school's management as the support for middle managers, including subject leaders, develops, thereby addressing an issue from the last report. The recently appointed head of sixth form has clear vision and direction

and has put in place many strategies to improve its efficiency. As yet these have not had time to make a full impact on the development of the sixth form.

As a consequence of these significant developments, the leadership and management of the school is now good. It is supported by particularly good staff morale and the involvement of all teaching staff in the development process. These developments are beginning to raise standards and to promote high quality care and education. As yet just over one third of the annual cycle of monitoring the school's and students' performance has been completed, and the detailed school calendar provides a clear basis for its full implementation. The school is well aware of what is needed to promote further improvement; this is reflected in its current school improvement plan.

The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Equality of opportunity is well promoted. There is also particularly good consideration shown towards students with additional learning needs and difficulties.

Following the flood when large quantities of equipment including IT, music, art and other technology were lost, the school has been re-equipped to a good standard. The resources are deployed effectively and efficiently. However, high costs were incurred following the flood, mainly due to exceptional staff costs whilst the school was operating on split sites. This resulted in deficit budgets in 2005–6 and in the current financial year. A well considered deficit recovery plan has been proposed by the acting and associate headteachers, supported by the LA. This seeks to return to a small surplus budget during 2007–8, increasing this in subsequent years. Through such measures, the school provides good value for money.

The governing body discharges its responsibilities satisfactorily. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet the current government requirements. Through its recently improved self-evaluation, the school now has a good capacity to improve, although it is too soon for this to be reflected in improved standards of achievement.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	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	3	
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	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3	
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	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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

Newman Catholic School

Lismore Place

Carlisle

Cumbria

CA1 1NA

17 January 2007

Dear Students

Thank you all for your help when I visited Newman with Mrs Broomhead and Mr Henshall in January. We greatly appreciated talking to you and getting your views on the school.

We think that the school has greatly improved since the last inspection in 2004, and especially since September. The introduction of targets for your work as well as regular assessments on how well you are doing will help you all to do better and achieve higher standards.

We have asked the school to do four things to continue to improve:

- to improve the standards you achieve throughout the school. The target arrangements are now in place to do this and your November assessments showed how far you had gone to meet them and so improve your work
- to make sure that all subjects make good use of the targets and monitor these
- to help you to have positive attitudes to your school work and to develop good study skills; and
- to make sure that you all know your targets and, importantly, know what you have to do to meet them.

The whole school has been through a very difficult time since the floods in 2005. You have all done very well continue to work hard and to achieve well. The school has very good resources as well as good management. This will help you all to achieve well.

We wish all the best for your future success.

Yours sincerely

Martin Bradley

Her Majesty's Inspector