

Cardinal Hume Catholic School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108412
Local Authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	331432
Inspection dates	5–6 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Brian Blake HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1,059
Sixth form	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Tony Duffy
Headteacher	Mr Nick Hurn
Date of previous school inspection	March 2006
School address	Old Durham Road Gateshead Tyne and Wear NE9 6RZ
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors. The inspectors visited 21 lessons and held meetings with the chair of governors, staff, groups of students and some external school partners. A range of documentation was scrutinised including student performance data in national tests and examinations. The inspection team also took account of 236 parental questionnaires and 73 staff questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. They looked in detail at the following:

- Attainment and progress in mathematics at both key stages.
- The extent to which students feel safe?
- The curricular provision, including impact and provision for work-based learning.
- The impact of equality issues (race, gender and disability) on provision.
- The effectiveness and quality of provision in the sixth form.

Information about the school

Since the previous inspection in March 2006, the school has moved to a new building on a new site. This modern building has extensive facilities across all curricular areas, and embraces a host of new technologies suitable to the school's specialist status in mathematics and computing. The school has a stable staff. The numbers of students has risen over the past two years, particularly in the sixth form.

Further information about the school

	School's figures	School's figures compared with other schools
School size	1,059	Average
Free school meals	24.5%	Above average
Proportions of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	25.5%	Above average
Proportion of minority ethnic students	6.1%	Well below average
Proportion of students who speak English as an additional language	3.9%	Below average
Proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs	1.9%	Below average

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Cardinal Hume is an outstanding school, providing a stimulating and challenging learning environment for all its students. All those who work in the school want to raise standards and help all students achieve the best of which they are capable. Standards are improving across both key stages and in most subjects and students achieve well. The new building is very impressive and makes a significant difference to the teaching and learning environment.

Since the previous inspection, senior managers and governors, together with external partners, have successfully improved provision at the school. The transfer to a new, high-tech building has enabled the school to pursue its aim of excellence in all that it does, particularly in teaching and learning. The morale of staff is very high, which contributes very positively to the improvements being made at the school. The way the school has embraced new technology and provided every student with their own personal laptop provides a high level of motivation, and access to extended information both in and out of school.

There have been significant improvements in almost all areas of provision over the past two years. Provision is at least good, but is more often outstanding in almost all aspects of the school's work. Leadership and management are outstanding, and all those who contribute to the running of the school have a clear and shared sense of purpose and direction for continued improvements. This is informed by very detailed information about students' progress and achievement. Senior managers helpfully identified a number of aspects in mathematics for further improvement because mathematics does not yet show the same trend in improvement as other subjects.

The management of performance is outstanding, which accounts for the positive work ethic created within the school, and the sense of belonging seen in both staff and students. Overall, the school has outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in mathematics by:
 - improve the planning of the Key Stage 3 curriculum to reflect more accurately the broad range of students' abilities
 - develop further the effective use of individual student attainment targets for improvement
 - develop and share effective practice in teaching and learning in mathematics to achieve a greater consistency of good or better teaching
 - deploy staff resources at Key Stage 4 more effectively.

How well does the school meet the needs of individuals and different groups of pupils?

1

Many factors contribute to the students' academic and personal progress in the school, which is outstanding. When they arrive at the school, standards are broadly in line with national averages and the students continue to make steady progress during Key Stage 3. During Key Stage 4, more rapid progress is made, so that by the time they reach Year 11, the percentage of students achieving five or more A*-C grades at GCSE is outstanding; the unvalidated data for 2008 show that 97% of students performed at this level. Attainment in mathematics, one of the school's specialist subjects, is average, as is overall progress in this subject across the school. The senior staff are taking robust action to raise standards in this area. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress relative to their capabilities.

The personal development of students is a particular strength of the school. For example, behaviour is exemplary. Students are polite, considerate and courteous to each other. New students, especially those from outside the UK, are helped to settle quickly into the school's routines. Older students provide excellent role models, and students of all ages and backgrounds say they feel safe at school because they have a clear understanding of the possible risks to their well-being.

Students have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles, making sensible choices in what they eat and drink. Large numbers also take advantage of opportunities to exercise regularly.

The students make a significant contribution to both the school and the wider community, for example, through fund raising for local, national and global appeals. Work-based learning opportunities ensure that the students develop a good understanding of their future economic well-being.

The school monitors student attendance effectively, and although improving, it remains average overall, with students' punctuality good.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	1
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
Pupils' attendance and punctuality	3
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

The quality of the school's work

Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly, using well informed and detailed assessment information to target improvements for their students. Subject knowledge is good or better, and is used well in lessons to encourage students to discuss ideas and concepts. The school makes outstanding use of new technology, especially in the use of laptops for every student. The students praise the access they have to a range of software programs, and the use of the internet for research and electronic mail. Effective use is made of teaching time in most lessons, although on occasions some teachers engage in too much talk. There are high expectations of students to make progress in their learning, including adopting positive attitudes in and around the school. The overwhelming majority of students are enthusiastic learners, as seen in their exemplary behaviour. Students generally have a clear understanding of what they are expected to achieve.

The curriculum is outstanding, and is at the cutting edge of using technology to aid students' learning. This is helping to increase the pace and excitement of learning for students, and is used very effectively across the curriculum. The technology also enables the school to closely monitor students' work and maintain good contact with parents. Curriculum development is outstanding and is keeping pace with the changing needs of its students, for example, the vocational building construction course allows them to experience the world of work and make productive links with employers.

The school's strong ethos contributes positively to the personal development of the students, and is reflected in the very secure staff/student relationships. The school's support for individual students is outstanding. Exceptional high quality care ensures that students feel secure and safe and that students of all backgrounds, including

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

those with additional learning needs, are given timely support to enable them to achieve the high expectations that the school has of them. The excellent pastoral system supports students to behave well, resolve differences and give them a role in contributing to the school and wider community. External partners, for example the local 'beat police officer', are very well involved in the life of the school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment and academic guidance	1
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	1
Support, guidance and care	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The procedures for monitoring the work of the school are outstanding. Regular and systematic gathering of students' progress and subject department performance have resulted in high quality self-evaluation, which has included the issue of raising standards in mathematics. The school is justifiably proud of its strategies to promote greater equality. Differences in the attainment of various groups of students have narrowed because the school has closely monitored the achievement of every student and has tailored a curriculum appropriate to their needs.

The school makes all reasonable efforts to ensure that safeguarding regulations and standards are met. Clear and accurate information is given to students to help keep them safe, and close links with the police and primary health care workers help to maintain the well-being of students. Child Protection arrangements are in place.

Governors have the expertise to be influential in determining the direction of the school. Regular visits ensure that governors are involved fully in monitoring the work of the school and that the targets for improvement are appropriate and being met. Governors also provide strong links with the community, and are effective in challenging the school.

The regular contact with parents and carers, most often via the students' laptops, helps to maintain a good flow of information between the school and home. The vast majority of parents are pleased with the school and feel well informed about their child's progress. The school works very successfully to develop external partnerships, including links with a local further education college, to provide a number of vocational learning courses. The school is making an important contribution to the local community, via access to its facilities.

The methodical and effective use and deployment of resources results in the school achieving outstanding value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Monitoring, evaluating and planning for improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
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Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	1
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	2
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	1
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	1
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	1
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

Students' attainment has risen since the previous inspection, but remains broadly average. Progress in lessons is generally good, and students across a wide range of abilities achieve well in vocational courses. Overall achievement is therefore good. The students conscientiously and willingly accept responsibility in the school community, for example, in training to become peer mentors for students in Years 7 to 11. There is good access to a wide range of courses, both academic and vocational, to suit students' needs and interests. There is also a good balance of teacher directed and independent learning, which is enhanced by the provision of personal laptops. The students appreciate the quality of teaching, which is good. They also recognise the benefits of supervised study time because, as one student said, 'It keeps you focused and stops you being bothered by others in the school'. The systems for assessment, including student self-assessment, are very effective. The leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. Great care is taken to know the students well and, as a consequence, relationships with the students are excellent. More students now stay on at post-16, both from this and other schools within the local authority. Very good links have been established with universities and businesses, which have had a significant impact on students' choices for their futures.

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

Around one-fifth of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire, and almost all were extremely positive about the quality of provision provided by the school. Typical comments included, 'the school has pioneering technology', 'strong leadership', 'good transitional arrangements' and 'impressed with positive staff attitude'. A small number of respondents raised queries that they would wish the school to be aware of. Among the more significant of these were 'lack of prompt response to queries raised', and 'lack of flexibility in the newly introduced parents' meetings'.

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. In 2006-7, 14% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2006-7, 46% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing for its pupils suitably. In 2006-7, 34% of schools were judged satisfactory.
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. In 2006-7, 6% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



18 November 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Cardinal Hume Catholic School, Gateshead, NE9 6RZ

You will be aware that along with three colleagues, I recently visited Cardinal Hume to find out how well the school is helping you to be successful in your education. During the inspection, we spoke with a large number of you, your teachers, the chair of governors, and others who visit the school on a regular basis.

Overall, Cardinal Hume provides you with an outstanding quality of education. In almost all aspects of its work, the school makes good, more often outstanding, provision for you. You told us you feel safe, and that overwhelmingly you enjoy attending school. We were particularly impressed with the quality of support and care, and the use of new technologies to help you to learn more effectively. It was very clear that you enjoy having your own laptop, and having access to the internet to help you research and learn. We noted that a number of you and your parents felt that the laptop bags are too small to carry all that you need during the day and that for some, the carrying of the laptop itself was a problem. We have passed on your concerns to the senior staff, who are keen to try and resolve the problem.

Standards are good overall and improving. Standards in mathematics, which is one of the school's specialist subjects, are average and progress overall is satisfactory. The school recognises this, and is working hard to help raise standards in this subject for everyone.

I should like to thank you, in particular, for your willingness to talk openly and honestly about life at school. I should also like to thank all those parents who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire. The vast majority of parents are very positive about the school.

We wish you well in the future.

Brian Blake
Lead inspector
On behalf of the inspection team

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