

Inspection of a good school: Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School

Old Oscott Hill, Kingstanding, Birmingham, West Midlands B44 9SR

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 October 2021

Outcome

Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This school provides pupils with a good standard of education and a rich variety of broader opportunities. Pupils enjoy school. They are well cared for and they appreciate their teachers and other staff. They know that all staff want the best for them. Everything the school does is carefully planned and rooted in its eight pairs of 'Wiseman virtues'. Staff seek to develop these virtues in pupils. For example, the school wants pupils to become learned and wise, but also compassionate and loving.

Pupils learn well in most subjects. Leaders and staff have revised learning schemes in all subjects over the last two years. These schemes ensure that pupils' learning usually builds well from year to year. However, there is more to be done to ensure that all pupils learn equally well in all subjects.

The school is calm and orderly throughout the day. Pupils behave well and have good attitudes to learning. Pupils feel safe. They know that bullying will not be tolerated. They understand that Cardinal Wiseman is a 'no hands on' school where everyone is expected to treat others with kindness and respect.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school is well led. The headteacher and senior leaders provide clear, principled leadership that staff appreciate. Staff form a united team that is committed to providing the best education it can. Leaders have ensured that staff are not weighed down with unnecessary tasks. Instead, they are able to focus their efforts on teaching and supporting pupils. Governors know the school well. They provide effective support and challenge to leaders.

Staff in all subjects have worked hard to revise how they teach their subjects. Leaders and teachers have written high-quality 'knowledge books' for all subjects. Staff use these knowledge books to inform their teaching. Pupils use them as learning resources. Both

teachers and pupils feel very positive about these recent changes. Subject content is now well organised and what pupils should learn is set out in a logical sequence.

Because of COVID-19 (coronavirus) and lockdowns, the introduction of revised learning plans has been rather stop-start. In some subjects, leaders have not yet had the chance to look at what is working well and what needs adjusting. Revised learning plans are being delivered better in some subjects than in others. Some low-ability pupils are not learning as well as they could. This is because they find the knowledge books difficult to read and/or understand. They struggle to keep up with their classmates as a result.

Pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities are supported well in school. Specialist staff know their needs and provide effective extra support.

The school places a strong emphasis on reading. Pupils read in their form groups each day. Every lesson contains elements where pupils are expected to read, often out loud. Pupils who find reading difficult are given extra support to catch up. This emphasis on reading is proving successful in helping pupils become confident readers.

The school's promotion of pupils' wider development is extremely effective. Leaders place as much emphasis on personal development as they do on academic excellence. All pupils take part in 'Transformation' every Friday afternoon. They choose from a wide range of enrichment options. These include debating, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, pottery, creative writing and helping in a primary school. Leaders plan the menu of choices and record the activities that pupils have undertaken. Their aim is that all pupils should learn new skills, find something that is their passion and serve the school and the community. Pupils who spoke with inspectors and parents who responded to Parent View were full of praise for this programme. It contributes exceptionally well to pupils' wider development.

Pupils are polite, well-mannered and courteous. They are keen to do well in school. They are attentive and well behaved in class and at social times. Pupils told inspectors that disruption to lessons is very rare.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding and care for pupils throughout the school. Staff know that keeping pupils safe is their top priority. They are vigilant for signs that pupils might need extra help. Leaders ensure that pupils get the help they need, when they need it, from external agencies when appropriate.

Safeguarding has a prominent place in the curriculum. For example, pupils told inspectors how much they valued recent teaching about the unacceptability of sexual harassment and the use of sexualised language.

Pupils, parents and staff agree that pupils are safe in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Revised schemes of work and knowledge books have been put in place relatively recently. There is some variability between subjects in how well learning is sequenced. There is also variability in how well the revised schemes are being implemented within subjects. Leaders should ensure that the revised curriculum is put into practice equally effectively in all subjects.
- Some low-ability pupils are not learning as well as other pupils. This is because they find some content difficult to read and/or understand. The measures being taken to support them in class are not always proving successful. Leaders should ensure that low-ability pupils are able to learn as effectively as other pupils.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	103539
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10200093
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	730
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Penelope Manford
Headteacher	Robert Swanwick
Website	www.cardinalwiseman.net
Dates of previous inspection	21 and 22 September 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a voluntary-aided Catholic school, within the Archdiocese of Birmingham. Its most recent section 48 inspection took place in November 2018.
- The headteacher took up his post in January 2019.
- The number of pupils in the school has grown considerably since its previous inspection. It is now full in all year groups except Year 11.
- The school uses three registered providers of alternative provision. A small number of pupils attend one of these.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. They also met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. An inspector spoke with a representative from the Archdiocese of Birmingham.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, history and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered safeguarding by meeting with the designated safeguarding lead and his deputy, scrutinising policies and records relating to child protection and examining the safeguarding checks made on staff before they join the school.
- Inspectors considered responses from staff to their online inspection questionnaire.
- Inspectors spoke informally with pupils at breaktime and lunchtime. They observed the school at these times.
- Inspectors considered responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online inspection questionnaire, including written responses.

Inspection team

Alun Williams, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lois Kelly

Ofsted Inspector

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