



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Cardinal Newman Catholic Comprehensive School
Dynea Road
Rhydyfelin
Pontypridd
RCT
CF37 5DP**

Date of inspection: November 2011

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**



During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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Context

Cardinal Newman Catholic Comprehensive school, which is located in Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority, is an English-medium 11-18 mixed school serving Catholic and other communities of the central valleys of south-east Wales. It has a very wide catchment area that extends from Gilfach Goch on the west to Bargoed on the east and includes the Rhondda, Cynon, Ely, and much of the Taff and Rhymney valleys. This area includes 25 Communities First Wards. Twenty-nine per cent of learners live in the 20% most deprived areas in Wales.

Around 13% of the school's intake is from primary schools outside the 'traditional' Cardinal Newman cluster. The school has 733 learners on roll, of whom 134 are in the sixth form. At the time of the previous inspection in November 2005, the roll was 766 pupils. Pupils come from a wide range of social backgrounds extending from the prosperous to the disadvantaged. Nearly 16% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is below the Wales average of 17.4%.

The school receives pupils from the full range of ability. One per cent of pupils have a statement of special educational needs, which is below the national average of 2.7%. A further 19% have special educational needs but no statement, which is above the national average of 17.6%. Seven per cent of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and just over 4% speak English as an additional language. No pupils speak Welsh as a first language

The headteacher took up his post in April 2011. The deputy headteacher spent eighteen months as acting headteacher, prior to the arrival of the new headteacher. In addition to the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, the central leadership team has three assistant headteachers, a bursar/chaplain and one co-opted member of staff.

The individual school budget per pupil for Cardinal Newman Catholic Comprehensive school in 2011-2012 means that the budget is £3,634 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the secondary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf is £4,511 and the minimum is £3,634. Cardinal Newman Catholic Comprehensive is 19th out of the 19 secondary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

The school's current performance	Good
The school's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

Current performance includes many good features including:

- a steady trend of improvement in pupil performance over the last four years to a level above that of similar schools;
- an effective whole school literacy strategy which has resulted in pupils' good communication skills;
- pupils' positive attitude to work and the secure progress in developing their learning skills;
- very good pupil behaviour and high levels of attendance;
- the beneficial care, support and guidance that contribute effectively to learners' outcomes and wellbeing; and
- the very caring and inclusive ethos the school.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects are judged to be good because:

- it has a good track record in making improvements, including a significant improvement in standards over the past two years;
- the senior leadership team has a clear vision for the school that is shared by all;
- the headteacher and deputy headteacher provide effective leadership;
- most middle leaders evaluate the work of their departments effectively;
- staff are held to account for improving standards and provision;
- the school uses data effectively to monitor pupils' progress; and
- the school is developing rigorous systems for improving quality.

Recommendations

In order to improve further, the staff and governors of Cardinal Newman Catholic Comprehensive School need to:

- R1 improve standards across the school, paying particular attention to the performance of pupils entitled to free school meals and girls;
- R2 improve standards in Welsh second language and the use of Welsh across the curriculum;
- R3 improve teachers' evaluation and planning to ensure effective learning, so that all teachers raise their practice to that of the best;
- R4 improve governors' understanding of the standards that pupils achieve to strengthen their role as critical friend to the school; and
- R5 strengthen self-evaluation processes to focus more clearly on pupils' learning and to refine improvement planning.

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. Progress in addressing the recommendations will be monitored by the local authority

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Performance at key stage 3 has improved over the last four years. In 2011, when compared with the relative performance levels of similar schools based on the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school's performance places it in the top quarter of schools. In English and in mathematics, a high proportion of pupils achieve the higher levels.

At key stage 4 in those indicators that include English and mathematics, the school's performance has shown an overall improvement over the last four years. In 2011 performance was above the expected level for similar schools.

In the sixth form, pupils perform well and a high percentage gain the level 3 threshold (equivalent to two A levels at grade A* to E).

At the end of key stage 4 a very high number of pupils remain in full-time education, either in the school or elsewhere. In 2011, no pupil left school without a qualification. Less than 1% of the pupils who left in summer 2011 are not in education, training or employment, which is much better than the national average.

At key stage 3, the gap in performance between girls and boys is smaller than the national and family averages. At key stage 4, boys' performance is much better than the average for the family of schools. Boys perform particularly well in English and their achievement has been above the family average for the last four years. In 2011, boys performed better than girls in science and mathematics. In previous years the gap between girls' and boys' achievement has been narrower, which is different to the national trend where girls outperform boys.

At key stages 3 and 4, many pupils who are entitled to free school meals achieve their predicted targets. However, there remains a large gap between the performance of those who are entitled to free school meals and those who are not.

Pupils with special educational needs generally achieve as expected.

In many lessons, pupils make good progress in developing their knowledge understanding and skills. They are very attentive, highly motivated and fully engaged in their learning. Pupils work productively in groups to discuss ideas and to build their knowledge. They draw effectively upon previous learning to understand new concepts. However, in a few lessons, pupils do not develop their skills sufficiently.

Pupils have good literacy skills. In many subjects they write fluently and at length for different purposes. They use a good range of descriptive and specific vocabulary to communicate their ideas and to present their knowledge. Pupils read a broad range of texts with understanding to support their learning. Many pupils extract information from their reading skilfully and more able pupils analyse texts successfully to develop a high level of understanding. Pupils listen very well and many speak clearly and

confidently. However, in a few lessons, girls lack confidence in expressing their ideas in front of other pupils.

Many pupils apply their numeracy skills well in many areas of the curriculum.

Most pupils respond very positively to tasks that challenge their thinking. They are able to make creative connections between ideas, and engage well with activities that demand that they explore and evaluate information. Most pupils know their learning goals and evaluate their own work well. They set personal targets for their learning, and a majority of pupils measure their progress towards them successfully.

Many pupils have competent skills in information and communication technology.

In Welsh second language at key stage 3, standards and the rate of progress are generally satisfactory. Pupils listen well and can pronounce words accurately. However, they engage in limited extended writing tasks and do not apply their knowledge and understanding of Welsh to wider contexts enough. Pupils apply the rules of grammar and punctuation correctly. However, many pupils lack confidence in speaking Welsh.

At key stage 4, pupils' performance in Welsh second language has improved over the last three years and, in the GCSE full course, pupils' performance is above local and national averages. However, in the GCSE short course, too many pupils do not achieve well enough.

Wellbeing: Good

Pupils feel safe in school and know where to go for support when they need it. They understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and are well informed about diet and exercise.

Pupils' behaviour is very good. They are respectful to one another and to adults. They arrive punctually to lessons and work purposefully. They work well independently and with others. Attendance rates are high and are in the top quarter of those for similar schools.

Pupils on the school council express opinions confidently and influence decisions on a range of matters, such as anti-bullying strategies and healthy eating. The eco committee has been effective in raising awareness of sustainable development and in improving the school environment, as well as maintaining active links with a school in Bukalasi, Uganda. Pupils have some say in what and how they learn, and in the development of a few key school policies, but this is underdeveloped.

Most pupils' social and life skills are developing well. The level of participation in physical and cultural activities in school and in the community is good. Pupils contribute to the caring ethos of the school through their concern for others and raise substantial amounts of money for charity.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum which meets statutory requirements fully. In collaboration with other providers, the school offers a wide range of 14-19 vocational and academic courses.

There is a wide range of activities for more able pupils to develop their abilities and talents, particularly for the most able in sixth form. This has contributed well to pupils' performance.

There is a wide variety of extra-curricular activities which benefit pupils' learning and skills. The school collaborates effectively with other providers to extend these opportunities. A few of these activities provide opportunities for older pupils to gain additional qualifications.

Effective whole-school literacy strategies have given all pupils many opportunities to develop their communication skills in most areas of the curriculum. This has had a positive impact on pupil outcomes. The introduction of the Welsh Baccalaureate has widened the opportunities for all pupils in key stage 4 and the sixth form to develop their key skills successfully. However, at key stage 3 there are not enough opportunities for pupils to practise and reinforce numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics.

All pupils study Welsh second language at key stage 3 and key stage 4. The strategic development of promoting the use of Welsh across the school is at an early stage.

The eco committee is an active group of pupils that contributes effectively to sustainable development initiatives throughout the school. Subject areas contribute well to sustainable development. The school has valuable links to schools in Africa, and pupils benefit positively from opportunities to develop their global citizenship.

Teaching: Adequate

In nearly all lessons, teachers establish very good working relationships with pupils and they have high expectations for pupils' behaviour.

The majority of teachers plan and structure lessons effectively. They set specific and relevant learning objectives and help pupils to reflect on their progress. Many teachers promote and develop pupils' literacy skills well. Many also use a full range of learning strategies skilfully to extend pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. They encourage interaction and discussion in lessons and use questioning well to check pupils' understanding and to extend their learning. They provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to work independently and with their peers. These teachers engage and motivate pupils successfully.

In the few examples of very good classroom practice, teachers use specific strategies to help individual pupils to make very good progress in their learning. They use imaginative strategies to help pupils to consider ideas in new contexts and

motivate pupils to make creative connections. A few very skilful teachers challenge pupils to plan specifically for their short-term learning and enable pupils to check their progress accurately by developing pupils' evaluation skills.

However, a minority of teachers do not plan lessons well enough to make sure that pupils have sufficient opportunities to develop fully their learning. In a very few of these lessons, teachers do not challenge pupils sufficiently. They miss opportunities to encourage pupils to explore important concepts and to improve and extend their knowledge and skills.

The school has appropriate procedures for assessment, recording and reporting. Nearly all teachers mark pupils' work regularly. Most teachers give pupils detailed and useful written feedback that helps them to know how well they are doing and how they can improve their work. However, the quality and helpfulness of teachers' marking vary too much. A minority of teachers do not give pupils enough detailed guidance on how they can improve their work. Many teachers encourage pupils to undertake self-assessment and peer assessment, but this is not widespread across the school.

Many teachers make effective use of the school's detailed pupil tracking system to help them to plan for teaching and learning and to set individual pupil achievement targets. However, not all teachers make enough use of this information to assist and improve their planning and teaching.

The termly pupil progress reviews and annual report ensure that parents and primary carers are well informed about the progress and achievement of their children.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school develops pupils' health and wellbeing successfully and this has a positive impact on pupils' outcomes, behaviour and attendance. The school promotes very well pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for others. These include older pupils acting as 'learning buddies' and peer counsellors. These opportunities have a positive impact on pupils' confidence and self-esteem.

There are well-established and very effective arrangements to support pupils in the move from key stage 2 to key stage 3.

Teachers give useful guidance to pupils when making informed option choices at key stage 4 and at post-16. The school provides a well-structured and coordinated programme to give pupils effective and pertinent support to move on to the next stage of their learning or employment.

The school is effective in identifying and providing for individual personal and learning needs. It provides a wide range of intervention support programmes which are responsive to pupils' needs, particularly for those pupils with additional learning needs. The school makes good use of a range of specialist services and vulnerable pupils are well supported.

From the beginning of this academic year, pupils with additional learning needs have been included into mainstream classes allowing them access to the full range of learning experiences. In mainstream classes they are generally well supported by a team of learning support assistants. However, where pupils with additional learning needs are taught in mixed-ability classes, pupils' learning support needs are not fully met.

The school keeps parents fully informed about their child's education and parents are invited to annual review meetings when individual education plans are updated and new targets agreed. However, pupils do not yet play a full part in their own target-setting processes.

The school has procedures and an appropriate policy for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Good

The school is fully inclusive and has an extremely caring ethos. The school has well-established core values and promotes respect for others. It welcomes pupils from a range of ethnic, faith and social backgrounds and ensures that they are smoothly integrated into the life of the school. The school challenges effectively stereotyped attitudes and all pupils have equality of access to the school's curriculum. The 'zero tolerance' approach to all forms of oppressive behaviour contributes successfully to a positive learning environment.

Despite the poor exterior condition of some of the buildings, the interior environment of the school is generally good with the wall displays in many classrooms greatly enhancing the learning environment. Overall, the well-maintained accommodation and grounds meet the needs of pupils. The indoor physical education facilities, however, remain poor.

The school has taken reasonable steps to ensure that pupils with physical disabilities do not have less favourable treatment within the constraints imposed by the nature of the older parts of the buildings.

Learning resources are appropriate across all subjects and there is good provision for information and communication technology, with six well-resourced suites.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Good
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Leadership: Good

The senior leadership team has a clear vision for the school that is shared by staff, pupils, parents and governors. All leaders have clearly-defined roles and contribute well to the strategic aims of the school. The recently-formed senior leadership team has a realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has developed sound structures to achieve the school's strategic improvement priorities. Staff are appropriately held to account for improving standards and provision.

Over the last two years, the senior leadership team has introduced a rigorous and consistent approach to the management and organisation of the school. Senior leaders have contributed effectively to improving pupil performance, including raising

standards in literacy, and ensuring that all learners achieve their potential. This contribution includes strong monitoring and evaluation procedures, and effective use of performance information to target support and intervention.

The senior leadership team provides suitable support and challenge to those middle managers for whom they have line management responsibility. This has contributed to the good standards in teaching and learning in most subject areas. Most middle leaders use data and tracking systems well, and in carrying out their work they focus effectively on the school's improvement priorities. However, a few middle leaders do not provide an effective enough lead to their departments in achieving the necessary improvements.

Well-established performance management arrangements appropriately identify individual and whole-school training needs in relation to the strategic priorities. Recently introduced monitoring processes have helped the leadership team to tackle underperformance robustly.

Governors are aware of the steps being taken to raise standards and have a satisfactory understanding of the day-to-day work of the school. However, they have limited understanding of the standards achieved by pupils. Their role as a critical friend is under-developed.

The school responds well to national priorities. It has established professional learning communities within the school and collaborates well with the Pontypridd Learning Partnership, which is made up of two other local schools and the further education college, to provide a good range of post-16 learning pathways.

Improving quality: Adequate

Over the past two years the school has established effective self-evaluation processes. It has addressed fully the recommendations identified in its last inspection report and, more recently, has developed sound management procedures that have secured improvement in key areas. In the last two years, results at key stage 4 have improved and a strong focus on literacy has resulted in improvements in pupils' communication skills. Improved pupil tracking systems have significantly raised pupil outcomes.

Self-evaluation draws appropriately on the views of pupils, parents and outcomes from external review processes. There is an appropriate range of procedures for gathering first-hand evidence about the quality of teaching and learning. Senior leaders regularly monitor lessons and scrutinise books. However, this is not focused clearly enough on pupil standards and progress in learning.

Senior leaders work closely with department heads to improve the quality of their data analysis, their departmental self-evaluations and development planning. Most departments analyse performance effectively and identify areas for development based on departmental and whole school priorities. Many are making good use of school tracking data to identify underachievement and plan effectively for improvement. This analysis has had a positive impact on raising pupil standards. However, a few departmental self-reviews are insufficiently evaluative.

The school's self-evaluation report is informative and gives a detailed and accurate account of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Improvement planning is soundly based on the findings whole-school self-evaluation activities. The school improvement plan identifies clear and appropriate areas for development, but does not include enough specific and measurable outcomes. Many of the departmental development plans are detailed and focused on departmental and whole-school priorities. However, a few do not include specific measurable targets for pupil achievement. A very few are inadequate.

Over the past two years the school has benefited from teachers working purposefully together in groups to share and explore their professional knowledge. These groups have focused on particular priorities for improvement effectively. Their work is well planned, ideas are shared and the initial impact has been evaluated. This strategy has had a positive impact on a number of areas in teaching and learning, particularly in the development of pupils' literacy skills.

Partnership working: Good

The school has developed effective partnerships with a wide range of key partners. Working relationships with partners are positive and contribute well to pupils' outcomes.

The school has productive 14-19 network partnerships. These have a positive impact on widening the options available to pupils at key stage 4 and the sixth form. The school works well with its partners to collect and use effectively information about pupils' progress and outcomes to improve the provision of partnership courses. However, the school has not developed fully quality assurance procedures that cover all aspects of the partnership's work.

The school has created strong links with parents and the local community. Communication with parents is good and contributes well to the calm and caring ethos of the school. The school works well in collaboration with a wide range of community and faith-based organisations, groups and agencies. It takes a lead role where appropriate to develop effective networks with many local agencies and groups. The school's involvement with community agencies has contributed significantly to improving pupils' wellbeing and engagement.

Resource management: Good

Overall, the school manages its resources well. It is appropriately staffed to deliver the curriculum effectively. Staff are generally deployed well to make the best use of their time and expertise. Staff training is clearly focused on meeting the priorities of the school.

The school works effectively with the local authority to maintain successfully a balanced budget. The school has developed good systems to make sure that funding is directed effectively towards strategic priorities. There is a clear system for the allocation and review of funding.

Overall outcomes for pupils are good, and the caring ethos and effective support have a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing. The school, therefore, provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

Performance at key stage 3 has improved over the last four years. In 2011, in the core subject indicator (CSI – the expected performance in English or Welsh, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the national curriculum), pupils' performance was in the top quarter of that for schools based on the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. The school has performed above the family average for the last four years. There has been an improvement in performance in English, science and mathematics. Pupils' performance in English and science has improved significantly, with the school rising to the top quarter of similar schools. In English and mathematics, pupils' performance at the higher levels is good. Pupils make very good progress in English from key stage 2 to key stage 3; good progress in CSI and science; and satisfactory progress in mathematics.

At key stage 4, the level 2 threshold (equivalent to five GCSEs at grade A* to C) including English or Welsh and mathematics has shown an overall improvement over the last four years, with an uneven profile against the family average. When compared to the performance of similar schools based on the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school's performance has risen to the top quarter in 2011. The school now achieves well above the expected level for all schools based on the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. The CSI shows a similar pattern.

Performance at the level 2 threshold has been below the family average for four years. When compared to similar schools, the school has risen from the bottom quarter to the top half of schools. However, the gap between performance in the level 2 threshold and in the level 2 threshold including English or Welsh and mathematics has been below family and Wales averages over the last three years.

At the level 1 threshold (equivalent to five GCSEs at A*-G), performance has increased in line with that of the family over the last four years. Pupils' performance in 2011 is in the top half of that for schools.

Pupils make good progress in all indicators that include English and mathematics from key stage 2 to key stage 4 and very good progress from key stage 3 to key stage 4 in these indicators.

In the sixth form, pupils perform above local authority and Wales averages. In 2011, 98% gained the level 3 threshold and the average wider points score (comprising all qualifications approved for use in Wales at the age of 18) was 1004.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to learner questionnaires

Estyn received responses from 186 pupils, selected at random from across the age range. All responses were more positive than those from other secondary schools.

Nearly all pupils say that they feel safe in school and that they have someone to turn to if they have any concerns. Most pupils believe that the school deals well with bullying.

Nearly all pupils consider that they are doing well and that staff help them to learn and make progress and encourage them to take responsibility. Most believe that they have enough books and equipment, and that homework helps them to understand and improve their work. Most pupils in key stage 4 and nearly all pupils in the sixth form say that they received good advice when choosing their courses. Nearly all pupils feel well prepared for further education or employment.

Most pupils state that the school teaches them to be healthy. Most indicate that there are plenty of opportunities to get regular exercise.

All pupils confirm that the school helps them to understand and respect people from other backgrounds, and that staff treat them fairly and with respect. This is a much higher proportion than that found in other secondary schools.

Many pupils feel the school takes account of their views. Many learners also state that pupils behave well and that they can get on with their work. This compares very favourably with the views of pupils in other secondary schools.

Responses to parent questionnaires

There is no commentary on the parent questionnaires due to the small number of responses received (fewer than 10).

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Sarah Lewis	Reporting Inspector
Sue Haliwell	Team Inspector
Christine Hooper	Team Inspector
Mark Evans	Team Inspector
Carol Beer	Team Inspector
Edward Tipper	Lay Inspector
Rebecca Collins	Peer Inspector
Gerard McNamara	School Nominee

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk)

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority.

Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of six during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The four key stages cover the following year groups:

Key stage 1	Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11