

Catholic Diocese of Northampton



**INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL
CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**
(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

**CARDINAL NEWMAN
CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL**
Warden Hill Road, Luton LU2 7AE

DfES School No: 821/4606
URN: 142310

Head Teacher: Mr Andrew Bull
Chair of Governors: Ms Fiona Traynor- Bucknell

Reporting Inspector: Mrs Jo-Anne Hoarty

Date of Inspection: 16 & 17th June 2022

The school is in the Trusteeship of the Diocese and
St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust

Information about the school

Cardinal Newman Catholic School is an 11-18 co-educational school in the Diocese of Northampton. The school is a founding school within a trust of Catholic schools (STCAT) and is the only Catholic Secondary school in Luton, which has areas of high deprivation. There are 177 members of staff, 60 of whom are Catholic. There are 1698 pupils on roll, of whom 1391 are Catholic with the remainder coming from a range of Christian and other faith backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is approximately 12%. 35% of pupils speak English as an additional language. The school has three new specialist provisions since the last inspection: The Don Bosco Centre for the pupils with behavioural needs, The Emmaus Centre, which is for counselling and well-being, and the St. Brigid Centre for pupils who are visually impaired or with Autistic Spectrum conditions as well as the whole school SEND provision. Since the last inspection there has been a change of headteacher and a significant number of new leaders.

Key grades for inspection

1: Outstanding

2: Good

3: Satisfactory

4: Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

Cardinal Newman is an exceptional Catholic school with a strong sense of mission which is shared across the whole community. The headteacher and senior team are inspirational in their commitment to serving their community and they continually strive to be even better for the good of the pupils in their care. The headteacher has a strong vision for Catholic education and he has inspired staff across the school to work with him in this. Pupils are genuinely at the heart of the work of the school; they are central to everything from the vision to the most basic routine. Staff, pupils, and parents are rightly proud of their school.

The Catholic life of the school is of paramount importance and it permeates all aspects of school life. The care for the most vulnerable members of the community is prioritised and the school is rigorously inclusive. Leaders are justly proud of the exceptional provision for pupils with SEND, visual impairment, behavioural needs, and those with well-being needs. These provisions are a representation of what this school stands for. All pupils are made to feel welcome and valued. They feel safe and appreciate that they are able to thrive in the environment that has been created for them.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

The school remains in a very strong position to provide outstanding Catholic education. The strong vision and commitment of the headteacher and senior team means that the school and its community continue to thrive and there is a strong sense of perpetual motion towards continuous improvement. The targets from the previous Section 48 Inspection have all been successfully addressed. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils is excellent, and gaps have narrowed significantly. A Faith in Action award has been established and the role of faith ambassadors is currently being developed. Since the interim monitoring visit in February 2020, members of the Religious Education (RE) department have taken a leadership role and delivered on continuous professional development sessions across the school. Numbers on A-level RE courses have increased slightly and there is a clear strategy to continue to promote these courses.

The quality of self-evaluation is outstanding. Leaders have a thorough understanding of the school and are robust in the assessment of performance. All judgements are informed by evidence and areas for development are sharply focused on improving experience and outcomes.

The Headteacher has an inspirational vision for Catholic education. The leadership of the school are dynamic and ambitious and are committed to developing new leaders both internally and from outside the school. This will ensure that the richness of the Catholic education provided by the school is able to grow and evolve over time.

Catholic Life

Grade 1

Pupils take a leading role in promoting the distinctive values of this school. They demonstrate a very good understanding of the school's mission and can articulate how this manifests itself in the daily life of the school. They are active participants in promoting the common good and serving the needs of more disadvantaged. Pupils have been witnesses to their faith through their charity fundraising and organising hampers for local foodbanks. Year 11 pupils have been particularly active through their provision of a Christmas party for children with disabilities each year. The pupils, through the student council, vote on a charity of their choice each year. The school council is active in its promotion of the Catholic life of the school and there is a lived sense of community. Pupils feel safe in school and are extremely comfortable with exploring their faith independently and collectively: Behaviour is impeccable and pupils respond to the excellent structures and routines extremely well. Pupils know that they are cared for and they respond to the example set by staff by treating each other with dignity and respect.

Pupils highly value the school's chaplaincy provision. This provision is a central and celebrated aspect of the life and mission of the school. It is led by an inspirational school chaplain who provides love and support to each member of the community so that they feel nurtured and valued at all times. Chaplaincy provision genuinely permeates all aspects of school life and is a significant reason for why those in his community can thrive. The school chaplain embraces others to contribute to this exceptionally strong provision. The Catholic Life Group consists of a cross section of staff who are welcomed to work collaboratively to enhance the overall provision. This means that the school has a dynamic and well considered chaplaincy programme with a consequence that children have many opportunities for spiritual and moral development. The PSHE/RSE programme is extremely well planned. The co-ordinator is able to be responsive to identify need so that pupils are supported in their spiritual and moral development, especially when considering very complex and sensitive topics. This could be seen in a recent adaptation of the Scheme of Learning to incorporate the issue of consent. The school mission statement is embraced by everyone. All staff make an active contribution to the Catholic life of the school. Leaders act as witnesses to their faith and as role models and staff follow their example. The pastoral care that is provided ensures that everyone, including the most vulnerable, are able to flourish. The provision of the Catholic life of this school can be observed throughout the school environment but most especially in the relationships that exist between all members of the community. There is a deep sense of respect for each other. The love and support shown for each other underpins the richness of this community.

Leaders and governors are active in their responsibility to monitor and evaluate provision. They triangulate a range of sources of information including learning walks, governor visits and stakeholder feedback. Their self-evaluation is accurate and robust because it is based on a rich knowledge of the school and a diverse range of evidence. Leaders promote a strong drive for continuous improvement. They are committed to serve others and the support provided to the community throughout the pandemic was exceptional. This was especially seen in the provision for the most disadvantaged learners, the care for vulnerable families and the support of those who experienced loss and bereavement. The strong focus on prayer during this time was a source of comfort, many of whom articulated this during the inspection period. Leaders and Governors are inspirational in their respect for the dignity of all and this remains at the heart of all decision making. This ensures the highest standard of Catholic education is provided on behalf of the Bishop.

Religious Education

Grade 1

The school ensures that pupils are developing an excellent subject knowledge through Religious Education. All of the requirements of the Religious Education Directory are met. Pupils value their religious education lessons a great deal. Evidence from lesson visits indicates that pupils have actively engaged in their learning, and they make the most of every learning opportunity they are presented with. Subsequently, pupils are seen to thrive and make excellent progress in lessons. This progress is rigorously monitored by their teachers, both within lessons and through assessments. Pupils have a clear understanding of the progress they are making and they know what they need to do to improve. Pupils can speak fluently and confidently about what they have learned in religious education, often citing examples from scripture to help them articulate their views. This was observed very clearly in Year

9 lessons on Judaism and Year 10 lessons on moral authority. The curriculum provides the opportunity for pupils to explore their own spirituality through the context of exploring the traditions of other faiths. This offers a rich diversity of the knowledge that pupils are building. Relationships between pupils and their teachers is excellent. It is this that underpins provision. Behaviour in lessons is exceptional. Pupils respond extremely well to the clear consistency of routines and high expectations. The practice of the Religious Education Department exemplifies the school mission. Teachers are role models for their pupils and they provide rich opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual and religious literacy. This includes a continuous opportunity to engage with prayer and scripture. Pupils appreciate these opportunities and they respond in a respectful and reverent way. Pupils achieve extremely highly in religious education in this school and this has been sustained over a significant period of time.

The quality of provision in Religious Education is very strong. The team demonstrate excellent subject knowledge through the planning and delivery of their lessons and especially in their interaction with children. This was particularly seen in a Year 9 lesson on Judaism when the teacher was observed to respond adeptly to challenging questions posed by pupils. Teachers react flexibly in response to pupils' perceptive comments and ability to make links across topics and indeed faith traditions. There is a strong sense of purpose across the team, and they have a consistent and ambitious vision for the curriculum in Religious Education. Teachers can articulate a holistic view of what constitutes achievement in religious education, demonstrating a commitment to nurturing the whole child, whilst providing an excellent academic curriculum. The curriculum is carefully planned, and learning is sequenced in a well thought out way. A particular strength of the implementation of the curriculum is the building of pupils' knowledge and the clear commitment to developing religious literacy. The impact of this is that pupils are able to articulate their views in a comprehensive way, substantiated with rich sources of evidence, often based on scripture. Clear pedagogical choices have been made to ensure that knowledge is retained and retrieved by pupils when required. An increasing level of challenge is seen as the curriculum progresses. Very good examples of critical thinking and evaluation were seen in Year 10 exercise books and on Jesus or a moral teacher. The sequencing of learning enables pupils to move beyond the building of knowledge to think critically and evaluate. These higher order skills were also seen in Year 7 lessons. Teachers provide very good feedback to pupils and these are clearly embedded practices across the department. Pupils are actively encouraged to respond to feedback which results in a clear impact on learning over time. The subject leader for religious education provides an excellent example for other middle leaders to follow. He has a clear vision for religious education and he communicates this to the team well so that it is consistently shared.

Leaders and Governors ensure that Religious Education is a core subject within the school. The Department is well resourced and appropriately funded. They are committed to ensuring access to high quality training so that teachers can continue to provide excellent Religious Education for their pupils. The subject leader is well supported by the deputy headteacher and they share a sharp awareness of areas of strength and developments. They are committed to strengthening the excellent provision. Governors are active in their responsibility in monitoring and evaluating the quality of religious education, including offering appropriate challenge where required.

Collective Worship

Grade 1

Pupils are consistently actively engaged in a rich experience of prayer and liturgy throughout their life at the school. Pupils were able to articulate how they are involved in the planning of Mass and liturgy through selecting readings and music. Pupils appreciate the importance of prayer and reflection and are confident in participating in and sharing prayer. During the Inspection, a Year 9 Tutor Group retreat was observed. Pupils were confident in sharing their experiences. They were extremely respectful of each other when exploring their faith and sensitive topics. Pupils appreciate opportunities for collective worship, especially when it inspires them to action. The Year 10 collective worship observed provided a specific call to pupils to put their faith in action in the following weeks.

A wide range of evidence was provided to indicate how prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school. Opportunities are carefully planned, according to the liturgical calendar. Prayer is the focal point in moments of celebration and is used as a source of comfort during sorrow. This was evidenced by the on-line staff prayer group established during the pandemic which subsequently remains active. Prayer was also shared with families during this time with one parent commenting that the provision of prayer

by the school was a prominent feature of their lockdown life. The school places significant importance on the place of scripture in prayer and liturgy. It has worked hard to ensure that scripture is a prominent feature of all collective worship, prayers at the start and end of the day, as well as displayed around school. Opportunities for retreat are skilfully planned for each year group. Expert delivery, the provision of engaging activities and the creation of a safe, nurturing environment results in rich opportunities for pupils to continue to develop their personal faith and relationship with God. The provision of collective worship is a shared responsibility, distributed across the school. Therefore, a wide range of staff confidently plan and lead creative opportunities for prayer and liturgy and they skilfully involve pupils in this so that it is a meaningful experience. The centrality of prayer and liturgy is also demonstrated through the physical environment. The chapel occupies a central location and is used frequently for prayer and liturgy, including a weekly morning Mass. It is accessible at all times. A new prayer space, The Marian chapel, has also been designated within the Religious Education teaching block, offering a further opportunity for pupils to experience prayer when desired.

Leaders, including governors, place the highest priority on the provision of prayer and liturgy in the school. They ensure that a rich programme of high-quality opportunities is planned and delivered. Therefore leaders and governors are active participants in prayer and liturgy within the school and robust processes are in place for monitoring and evaluation. They ensure that staff have the resources and skills required to continue to provide the highest quality experiences of prayer and liturgy for pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further improve the opportunity for pupils, particularly in Years 8 and 9, to access the higher order skills of critical thinking and evaluation. The skills should be firmly embedded into the development of the scheme of learning so that they are consistent across year groups.
- Provide further planned opportunities for teachers to share the excellent practice across the department.