



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru  
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

**A report on**

**Cardinal Newman R.C. Comprehensive School  
Dynea Road  
Rhydyfelin  
Pontypridd  
RCT  
CF37 5DP**

**Date of inspection: May 2018**

**by**

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

## About Cardinal Newman R.C. Comprehensive School

Cardinal Newman Catholic Comprehensive School is located in Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority. The school 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 in the west to Bargoed in the east and includes Rhondda, Cynon, Ely and much of the Taff and Rhymney valleys.

In 2017, the school reintroduced onsite provision for the sixth form after the termination of previous partnership arrangements. There are currently 773 pupils on roll, including 79 pupils who are in the sixth form. Around 14% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is below the Welsh average of 17% for secondary schools. Approximately 24% of pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas in Wales.

Around 19% of pupils have a special educational need, and of these around 1% have statements of special educational needs. Both are lower than the average figures for Wales, which are 21.5% and 2% respectively. Around 85% of pupils are from a white, British background. A very few pupils speak English as an additional language and a very few pupils are fluent Welsh speakers.

The headteacher has been in post since 2011. The leadership team consists of the headteacher, one deputy headteacher, four assistant headteachers, one acting assistant headteacher and one temporary associate assistant headteacher.

The school was last inspected in November 2011.

The school is currently a pioneer school and is working with the Welsh Government and other schools to take forward developments relating to professional learning.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.  
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

## Summary

Leaders' ambitious vision of securing high quality provision, management and professional learning has led to outstanding teaching, strong provision and wellbeing and consistently high standards at Cardinal Newman Catholic Comprehensive School. These successes are a result of rigorous self-evaluation processes and an extensive range of stimulating and challenging professional learning opportunities.

Very strong partnerships with local primary schools and highly effective and engaging teaching contribute successfully to the very strong progress that pupils make in their knowledge, understanding and skills from previous key stages. Beneficial provision for pupils' personal development supports them successfully to develop as ethical, informed citizens. Staff at all levels promote well the school's Catholic ethos 'heart to heart speaks' and this leads to an exceptional sense of community, teamwork and a common purpose in which pupils thrive.

<b>Inspection area</b>	<b>Judgement</b>
<b>Standards</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Wellbeing and attitudes to learning</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Teaching and learning experiences</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Care, support and guidance</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>Good</b>

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Improve the achievement of more able pupils at key stage 4
- R2 Strengthen provision to enable pupils to develop higher-order information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum
- R3 Eliminate the budget deficit

## **What happens next**

The school will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to self-evaluation to improve the quality of teaching, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

## Main findings

### Standards: Good

Overall, most pupils demonstrate an enthusiasm for learning and make consistently strong progress in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills. They show strong recall of prior learning and apply this knowledge well to new situations. They have high expectations of the quality of their own work, for example when pupils approach the study of chemical reactions to predict the proportions in which different compounds will react. In a minority of lessons, such as in geography, mathematics and in science, pupils make very strong progress overall.

Most pupils listen well to their teachers and each other. Their communication skills are a particular strength. They express their ideas clearly and confidently using subject specific vocabulary accurately. A minority of pupils are highly articulate, and provide well-reasoned, comprehensive contributions to discussions, for example when justifying their analyses of the causes of urban change in detailed, well-structured and assured responses. Most pupils read fluently, they have a clear understanding of the texts that they read and use a wide range of strategies successfully to retrieve information. The majority infer deeper layers of meaning when evaluating reading material well, for example when analysing the significance of lighting the boiler in the poem "The Student House" by Peter Finch. However, a few pupils do not infer meaning or analyse texts confidently.

Many pupils present their written work well. They produce well-structured extended writing that is generally technically accurate. They have a secure understanding of audience and they write well for a range of purposes, for example when writing to persuade the headteacher to sell 'fair trade' products in the school. The more able write very adeptly at considerable length, using a variety of interesting writing techniques and vocabulary in their work. While many pupils draft and edit their work to improve its quality well, the writing of a few pupils contains frequent basic spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors.

Many pupils use their thinking skills successfully in lessons, for example by drawing on prior knowledge to decipher unfamiliar language, to critically evaluate the social impact of disasters and to debate questions such as 'Why is the birth of Jesus important?'

Most pupils manipulate numbers when adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing well. They use units correctly when dealing with lengths, areas, volumes and weights. Many are able to convert between different units accurately. They are confident in using percentages and calculate interest and depreciation correctly. Most pupils use their numeracy skills successfully to solve everyday problems, for example when calculating the rabbit population on an island when it increases by 12% per year, or the amount of fertiliser required for a garden made up of complex shapes.

Many pupils collect and analyse data appropriately. They draw suitable graphs and use them to identify trends. They use scatter graphs and lines of best fit appropriately, for example to demonstrate a plumber plotting the length of time and cost of his last 10 jobs.

When given the opportunity, many pupils develop basic ICT skills well in beneficial contexts outside of ICT lessons. However, they do not develop their knowledge of more advanced applications in a wide enough range of subjects, for example the sophisticated aspects of spreadsheets, modelling, databases or coding.

Many pupils make good progress in their grasp of the Welsh language. They are able to produce suitable extended writing in a range of forms. They form sentences independently and communicate these orally with good pronunciation. Many pupils achieve a level 2 qualification in Welsh.

Between 2014 and 2015, performance in the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics was well above that of similar schools and was in line with that of similar schools in 2016 and 2017. Performance in the capped points score has been similar to that of similar schools in the last four years. During this time, pupils generally made very strong progress from previous key stages in these indicators and this is also true of their progress from previous key stages in all indicators in 2017. However, the proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE or equivalent grades at A\*-A has been below the average for similar schools in three of the last four years.

Between 2014 and 2017, boys' performance generally compares well with that of boys in similar schools in many indicators. During the same period of time, girls' performance has generally been above that of girls in similar schools in around half of indicators. Although girls' performance was variable in a minority of indicators between 2014 and 2016, in 2017 they performed better than the average for girls in similar schools in many indicators. The performance of pupils eligible for free school meals has generally been above that of this group of pupils in similar schools in a majority of indicators during at least three of the last four years, but has fluctuated in a minority of indicators over the last four years. Pupils with additional learning needs make strong progress. At the end of Year 11, nearly all pupils remain in full time education either in the school or in local schools and colleges.

In the sixth form, most pupils effectively recall prior learning to apply their knowledge to new situations. They develop well their ability to explore sophisticated theories and evaluate these critically. As a result, they increase their knowledge and understanding of these ideas well and make good progress overall. Performance in the sixth form in the level 3 threshold and the average wider points score has generally been similar to that of similar schools during three of the last four years. The proportion of pupils achieving three A\*-A grades is consistently below the average for similar schools.

### **Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good**

Nearly all pupils feel safe in school. They know to whom they can turn if they require help and many pupils believe that the school deals well with any incidents of bullying. Nearly all pupils behave very well in lessons and during lunch and break times. They arrive promptly to lessons and are ready to learn.

Nearly all pupils are polite and courteous and demonstrate good manners to adults and to each other. Most pupils listen respectfully to their teachers and peers and work productively and conscientiously together in pair and group work. They engage enthusiastically in lessons, take an active part in their learning and contribute

thoughtfully to discussions with their peers and visitors. They sustain concentration and demonstrate perseverance when they are engaged in challenging activities. As a result, most pupils become ambitious, capable and independent learners.

Many pupils have a positive attitude towards healthy lifestyles and a secure understanding of how to stay healthy. The majority take regular exercise through participating in the wide range of sporting activities on offer at lunchtimes and after school, for example football, rugby, netball, gymnastics and dance.

Most pupils develop their social and emotional skills well by participating in a broad range of activities in the local community and their parishes, for example through their involvement in confirmation celebrations, carol services and masses. A notable feature is the way in which pupils develop as ethical, informed citizens through their curricular and extra-curricular learning, for example through their involvement in raising money for local and national charities such as Sports Relief and the Royal British Legion and in form time when they demonstrate thoughtfulness and a deep awareness of the needs of people on the autism spectrum. Pupils reflect sincerely on these experiences and how they teach them to develop their own resilience.

The school council has had a positive impact on many aspects of school life. It is well organised and has a formal committee structure. Members of the council take forward issues of concern to them through meetings with the leadership team and also by independently actively canvassing the support of decision makers outside of the school to improve a range of facilities. In so doing, they demonstrate strong leadership skills and act as positive role models for their peers. They have supported the school in self-evaluation effectively by surveying pupils' views and preferences on teaching and learning, using a pupil-friendly questionnaire that they designed. Teachers have reflected effectively on this information to inform their practice. Pupils have also been involved in the refurbishment of facilities such as the changing areas, the redesign of the main hall and the introduction of the school blazer.

### **Teaching and learning experiences: Good**

Overall, the quality of teaching is excellent. Consistently high quality, engaging and challenging teaching is a strength of the school's work and contributes significantly to pupils' enthusiasm for learning, their strong outcomes and the very strong progress they make from previous key stages by the end of key stage 4.

Nearly all teachers have developed strong working relationships with their pupils. They know their pupils very well and have high expectations of them. Nearly all teachers have strong subject knowledge and convey effectively their enthusiasm to inspire and motivate their pupils to achieve their full potential. Most teachers make their classes stimulating and interesting places where pupils of all abilities feel supported and can learn productively.

A notable feature is that most teachers plan lessons that are of consistently high quality and engaging. They prepare imaginative, topical and stimulating activities to involve pupils of all abilities. For example, in a literacy nurture lesson, using the analogy of a golden retriever, the teacher illustrated highly effectively the concepts of finding and retrieving information from texts in a way that was accessible to all. Most teachers plan lessons that build well on pupils' prior learning, are increasingly challenging and provide for individualised support and challenge. This helps pupils

of all abilities to progress well and produce work of a consistently high standard. In these lessons, teachers plan effective opportunities for pupils to work in pairs and or groups, for example in design and technology where this type of activity, together with vivid imagery, is used very successfully to enable pupils to explore the hazards of working in the workshop. In these lessons, teachers ensure that they make the most of opportunities to consolidate effectively pupils' cross curricular skills, for example by ensuring that pupils develop their understanding and use of subject specific terminology accurately and in context. They use questioning skilfully to probe and develop pupils' understanding, and to extend and improve the quality of their verbal answers.

In a minority of instances, teachers provide an exceptionally high level of challenge throughout the lesson, supported by expert questioning that enables pupils to reflect on their and others' thinking and offer deeper, logical explanations. For example, in geography, pupils in the sixth form are challenged to build on their own and the responses of others, to consider the full extent of the economic and environmental impact of urban change. These teachers develop pupils' problem solving skills very well, and encourage pupils to persist so that they become independent and resilient learners.

In most lessons, teachers provide pupils with supportive verbal feedback on their work. Teachers' written feedback is generally constructive and provides pupils with useful advice on how to develop their skills and accuracy. Many pupils extend their answers effectively and improve the quality of their written work well in light of this feedback.

The school has developed a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs of pupils of all abilities well and supports its mission as a faith school. The curriculum provides pupils with beneficial opportunities to foster their interests, with a strong emphasis on developing their independence, resilience and wellbeing. The curriculum combines formal and informal events well with community participation that supports pupils to become confident and aspirational individuals. The school's 'Achieving Success' programme successfully enables pupils to take responsibility for their own learning through reflecting on the quality of their work and setting their own areas for improvement.

Pupils at key stage 4 and in the sixth form are able to choose from an appropriate range of academic and vocational subjects that meet their needs and aspirations well. These include suitable vocational options and the option of studying additional subjects at key stage 4, including Latin and ancient history. All pupils in Year 10 improve their understanding of the world of work through a period of work experience with local employers.

The school provides a wide range of valuable extra-curricular activities for pupils, including weekend courses and cultural visits abroad and in Wales. These courses provide important opportunities for pupils to develop their subject knowledge as well as their personal and social skills.

The school has developed very strong partnerships with its partner primary schools. It has established close links between core subject leaders and primary co-ordinators. This has helped, for example, to develop a shared approach to

developing pupils' numerical reasoning skills. Pupils benefit from a well-established and successful induction week at the school. As a result, pupils settle into Year 7 quickly and build on their knowledge and skills effectively as they transfer to the school.

The school has appropriate arrangements to identify and provide for the needs of more able and talented pupils. They benefit from participation in targeted activities run by the local authority and visits to university open days. The school provides valuable opportunities to study additional subjects after school in order to gain supplementary qualifications and to meet their aspirations, interests and abilities.

The school's curriculum arrangements and planning for the development of pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy are strong and ensure that pupils are able to develop these skills effectively. Its focus on improving pupils' oracy has had a particularly beneficial impact. This has developed pupils' ability to speak confidently and articulately in lessons, to visitors, when engaging in the community and in unfamiliar situations.

The school provides pupils with valuable opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in engaging and topical contexts during registration periods and independently at home through the 'home learning' project. For example, pupils investigate and report comprehensively on the implications of juvenile offending or write to discuss effectively the advantages and disadvantages of building a tidal lagoon in Swansea bay. In addition, partners from a local engineering company support vulnerable learners very effectively to improve their numeracy skills and contribute successfully to a very high proportion of these pupils attaining a level 2 qualification in mathematics. The arrangements during form time, in particular, have a beneficial impact on teachers' ability to develop effectively pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Provision for the development of pupils' writing for different purposes in worthwhile contexts across the curriculum is variable in few areas. In a minority of subjects, teachers develop pupils' ability to design, compose and create using a range of suitable software and applications. Overall, planning to develop pupils' ICT skills across the curriculum is at an early stage of development.

The provision for Welsh is strong. The school has provided valuable training to staff to improve their confidence in using Welsh and there are a broad range of activities that successfully celebrate and promote pupils' understanding of the cultural and linguistic identity of Wales, for example during trips to Llangrannog and Glan Llyn.

### **Care, support and guidance: Good**

The high quality care, support and guidance provided by the school contributes successfully to high levels of wellbeing among pupils. There is a very strong sense of community and belonging in which pupils thrive. All staff know the pupils well, offer a close network of support and strive to raise pupils' aspirations. Collectively, this contributes well to their strong performance and wellbeing.

The school offers a wide range of opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities and become active citizens within the school and wider community. Examples of these valuable roles, which contribute effectively to pupils' personal development, include numeracy, literacy and digital leaders. Opportunities to lead on fundraising,

in conjunction with the Catholic International development charity for example to raise funds for the Philippines and Syria, effectively help pupils to develop their understanding of their role in a global society. In addition, the school provides worthwhile opportunities to involve pupils in key decisions about school life, for example through the extensive work of the school council.

The school is highly successful in promoting spiritual, social, moral and cultural values. This contributes to a caring and inclusive ethos throughout the school community. Pupils' involvement in the Catholic community is a strong feature of the school's provision. They have valuable opportunities to contribute to liturgical events, mass, carol services and a retreat to Llantarnam Abbey during induction week for Year 7 pupils. These experiences contribute effectively to a strong sense of community and belonging at the school. Valuable key stage assemblies and form prayers contribute well to the spiritual development of pupils. This is shown through the respect with which pupils respond to sensitive issues, such as when considering the plight of refugees.

The school has strong provision for pupils' personal and cultural development. There are a wide range of worthwhile opportunities across the school for pupils to participate in sporting activities, the creative arts and music. For example, they develop their performing skills in the Shakespeare schools festival and Eisteddfodau. The school plans extensive curriculum opportunities to develop pupils' positive attitudes to health and wellbeing and healthy lifestyles. For example, pupils in Year 7 have beneficial opportunities to develop their understanding of personal safety through events run in partnership with external organisations. The school has strong arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

The school's provision for pupils with additional learning needs is highly effective. Staff identify pupils' learning needs promptly, put in place beneficial support strategies and monitor progress closely. The extra support offered to meet pupils' emotional, health and social needs is equally strong. These approaches enhance pupils' wellbeing very effectively, and enable them to make valuable progress and achieve strong outcomes at the end of key stage 4.

The school's approach to behaviour management and tracking is robust. School policies are well understood by both staff and pupils and implemented consistently. Staff monitor behaviour incidents closely, identify trends in behaviour and provide support when necessary.

The school also has an effective process in place to track the academic progress of individuals and groups of learners. Leaders use information on pupil progress well to identify underperformance and to plan effective interventions for those pupils in need of additional support. Attendance data is monitored regularly to identify and support pupils whose attendance is causing concern, although current strategies to improve attendance have not had enough impact on improving the attendance of a very few pupils.

The school provides comprehensive advice and guidance to pupils making choices at the end of each key stage. For example, all key stage 4 pupils have the opportunity to attend a careers fair and participate in work experience. Sixth form pupils benefit from visits from external speakers from the world of work and education, including from apprenticeship providers and universities. They receive a wide range of valuable support to prepare for the next stage of their lives.

The partnership with parents and carers is strong. They receive regular information about their child's progress and attendance. The school regularly involves parents in their child's education, including providing a literacy and numeracy transition evening for parents of pupils joining the school in Year 7. This strengthens partnership working with the school and helps parents to support their child's learning well. Parents of pupils with additional learning needs particularly value the support provided to both their children and the extended family.

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

### **Leadership and management: Good**

Over the last five years, the headteacher, supported ably by the senior leadership team, has pursued a highly ambitious vision of improving the quality of teaching, management and professional learning across the school. This vision has been embraced by all staff who share his passionate commitment to develop provision continually in all areas of the school's work. Leaders at all levels promote the school's Catholic ethos and there is a very strong sense of community, teamwork and common purpose. The strategic approach of leaders has led to outstanding teaching, high levels of pupil wellbeing, consistently high standards and the very strong progress that pupils make by the end of key stage 4.

Roles and responsibilities are distributed strategically and reviewed regularly to ensure a strong focus on the school's priorities. There are beneficial leadership development opportunities, for example secondments to the senior leadership team. Leaders at all levels carry out their responsibilities with rigour. They set challenging targets and have very high expectations of staff and pupils. Line management processes focus exceptionally well on improving teaching and securing pupils' wellbeing.

Performance management arrangements are used very well to hold staff to account and to identify their professional learning needs. Leaders monitor learning across the school closely, including through robust annual departmental reviews, weekly learning walks and the regular scrutiny of pupils' work. There is a strong focus on national priorities, including reducing the impact of deprivation and developing pupils' literacy, numeracy and Welsh language skills.

Leaders plan an extensive range of stimulating professional learning opportunities that stem from priorities for improvement identified in self-evaluation and performance management. These include high quality training on improving specific aspects of teaching as well as opportunities for staff to develop their leadership and management skills. This training is supported well by strategic partnerships with other schools, the local authority and a local university. Leaders rigorously evaluate the impact of the training offered to staff and continually refine and improve their provision. Staff are successfully encouraged to critically evaluate their teaching. For example, all departments have worked to plan a highly engaging lesson where pupils make excellent progress overall. Teachers deliver this lesson and other members of the department observe them doing so. The department then discusses the impact of this lesson on pupils' learning and works continually to improve its practice. Departments share usefully their findings from these activities with the rest of the

staff in training events. A few teachers work as pioneers with the Welsh Government and develop their professional knowledge strongly from their involvement in this initiative.

The governing body is very supportive and has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Governors contribute well to setting the school's strategic agenda and provide suitable challenge.

The school has developed a highly effective culture of continuous improvement. The combined effect of strong provision and consistently high quality teaching in lessons has contributed to the very strong progress that pupils make from their starting points. Self-evaluation processes at the school are well established and clearly understood by all staff. Leaders at all levels use performance data very well and have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They gather a wide range of first hand evidence effectively and consistently from annual departmental reviews, weekly lesson walks, lesson observations and pupils' books. A notable feature is how the school quality assures any feedback to departments and individual teachers. This means that judgements are secure and consistent across the school. All feedback is very clear and supports staff exceptionally well in their planning for improvement. This process has had a significant impact on improving leadership and teaching. The views of pupils and parents make an important contribution to improvements at the school. For example, following a pilot of the home-learning project, parents were consulted as part of a review of the strategy and, as a result of their feedback, the approach is now very effectively used across all of key stage 3.

Areas for improvement identified through the school's self-evaluation processes link closely with priorities in whole-school and departmental improvement planning. Middle leaders' self-evaluation processes are of consistently high quality. Their self-evaluation is comprehensive and evaluative, and ensures that they have a clear and accurate understanding of their team's strengths and areas for improvement. Their improvement planning includes precise actions to bring about improvements and they set themselves measurable criteria by which to judge the success of their approaches. This leads successfully to improvements within their teams.

The school uses its resources effectively. The headteacher, business manager and governors monitor spending decisions carefully and ensure that they are aligned with school priorities. There is a suitable recovery plan, agreed by the local authority, to reduce its current deficit. Curriculum provision and staffing are regularly and reviewed to bring about appropriate savings in spending. The school provides useful support to more vulnerable learners through its use of the Pupil Development Grant.

The school provides a generally safe, well-maintained, positive learning environment for its pupils. Outdoor space is appropriately used, although indoor physical education facilities are limited and a few areas of the school are in need of decorative repair.

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

<b>Excellent</b>	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
<b>Good</b>	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement</b>	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

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

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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