Inspection of a good school: Cardinal Griffin Catholic College

Cardinal Way, Stafford Road, Cannock, Staffordshire WS11 4AW

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 March 2023

Outcome

Cardinal Griffin Catholic College continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Cardinal Griffin Catholic College is a warm and welcoming place. Recent changes to school leadership have brought an energy and drive for further improving the school. Leaders have introduced a new 'college values and expectations' policy. Pupils consistently follow the new rules. This means that the college is a calm and orderly place in which to learn throughout the day. Sixth-form students like how their hard work and positive attitude to their studies are now being rewarded.

Bullying does not worry pupils. They know that leaders will respond to any reported incidents of bullying and take effective action. Consequently, pupils say they feel safe.

Leaders are highly ambitious for what pupils can achieve and many pupils realise these expectations. Leaders support pupils well in their career choices. Many sixth-form students go on to higher education, including Oxbridge. Pupils in Year 10 and 11 have clear plans for their future. This includes apprenticeships and further education.

Leaders teach pupils how to become responsible, active citizens. They do this by giving them roles and responsibilities, such as mental health ambassadors. Pupils also donate food to a local foodbank.

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

Leaders have thought carefully about the subjects that pupils study. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), follow a wide range of subjects at key stage 3 alongside their peers. This prepares them well for the choices they make at key stage 4. A wide range of subjects are offered at key stage 4 and key stage 5 matched to pupils' interests and abilities. While the number of pupils studying the English Baccalaureate (a specific set of subjects at GCSE level) is low, leaders are taking effective action to address this.

Leaders have introduced a new model for teaching and learning. This is beginning to make a difference. This includes leaders checking pupils' reading skills regularly and giving extra help to those who need it. In English, for example, the help given includes the use of 'vocabulary wheels'. These help pupils to understand the meaning of difficult words. They then apply these words successfully in their writing.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. Subject leaders plan their schemes of learning well. Topics are taught in a logical order. All lessons start with a recap of previous learning. This helps learning to stick in pupils' minds. Teachers use a variety of ways to check pupils' learning. For example, they use questioning to check pupils' understanding. When used well, for example, in English and biology, this helps to deepen pupils' understanding and knowledge. However, this is not the case in all subjects. This hinders pupils' progress in some subjects.

The school provides good care for pupils with SEND. The recently appointed leader for SEND has clear plans for how best to identify and support pupils who may need additional help. These plans include all pupils with SEND eventually having an individual education plan (IEP) and pupil passport. These should provide staff with helpful advice about how to support pupils' learning and how to effectively help pupils manage their emotions. However, some of the plans that have been developed so far lack specific detail about how staff can best support the pupils. This means that teachers do not always have the information they need to help pupils to make good progress.

Leaders provide effective support to pupils who need help to manage their behaviour. As a result, the number of repeated suspensions is reducing over time. Most pupils behave well in class, little learning time is lost. Even though a few girls in Year 9 and 10 do not always like the new rules, such as those relating to dress code, they do comply with them.

Leaders promote pupils' personal development well. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about the range of clubs and trips the school provides. This includes clubs in a number of sports and art. At the time of the inspection, pupils from the school provided a musical theatre performance for pupils from a local primary school. Next year there is a ski trip planned to Austria. Pupils value these experiences.

Most staff say leaders listen to them. For example, they have responded to the staff's request for leaders to be on a rota for lesson drop ins. Some staff say this is helping to improve pupils' attitude to learning.

Governors are committed to the school and its pupils. They make sure the school provides good value for money. As a result, pupils have a well-resourced environment in which to learn.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leadership of safeguarding is strong. Staff report concerns confident in the knowledge that leaders will take effective action. Leaders make sure that staff have regular training. This includes information about potential risks pupils face in the local area. The school completes all the appropriate checks on all adults who work at or visit the school.

Pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe through lessons and visitors who come into school to speak to them. For example, sixth-form students value the advice given to them by the police on road safety as they learn to drive.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The information provided to staff about how to support the learning of individual pupils with SEND is not always precise enough. This means that some pupils may not get the specific support they need to achieve well. Leaders should ensure that staff are provided with the precise information they need to enable them to identify, plan and deliver effective additional support for all pupils with SEND, so that these pupils fulfil their potential.
- Teachers do not use assessment well enough in some subjects. Questioning is not always used effectively to check understanding and feedback to pupils, at times, is not clear and direct. At times, this hinders pupils' progress. Leaders should improve the way that pupils' learning is assessed, so that pupils' understanding is deepened.

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 an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2018.

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.

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	124468
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10257031
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	870
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	134
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Janet Mellor
Headteacher	Hermione Gibson
Website	www.cardinalgriffin.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 and 7 February 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher was appointed to the school in September 2022. In January 2023, a new deputy headteacher and director of SEND were also appointed.
- The school uses two registered alternative provisions.
- A section 48 inspection to evaluate the distinctiveness and effectiveness of Cardinal Griffin Catholic College as a Catholic school took place in March 2022.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Year 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, other leaders, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, staff and pupils.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative of the diocese and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in English, geography, science and computing. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector also talked to pupils and staff at unstructured times during the day.
- The inspectors evaluated a range of school documents and looked at information on the school's website.
- The lead inspector checked the single central record of checks on adults in school and met with the school's safeguarding leaders to discuss how the school keeps its pupils safe.
- The inspectors reviewed the responses to Ofsted's staff survey and considered the responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses.

Inspection team

Lesley Yates, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Melanie Callaghan-Lewis	Ofsted Inspector

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