

# **Report summary for parents and carers on Cardinal Newman R.C. Comprehensive School**

Date of inspection: 09/02/2026

# Summary

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Cardinal Newman Catholic School is a warm, welcoming and inclusive community where Catholic values underpin school life. Staff and pupils have a positive and respectful working relationship, creating a strong sense of belonging. Most pupils are courteous, proud of their school and eager to contribute to its life and work. Most arrive punctually, settle quickly and engage purposefully in lessons. The school's deeply embedded culture of care and dignity ensures that most pupils feel safe, valued and well supported.

Across the school, teaching is effective overall. Many teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and plan coherent learning that builds pupils' understanding securely over time. In these lessons, pupils engage well, respond thoughtfully to questioning and make suitable, and often strong, progress. In a few particularly effective examples, teachers have very high expectations, adapt learning skilfully and use assessment information precisely to address misconceptions, enabling pupils of all abilities to thrive. Where teaching is less effective, expectations and challenge are not consistently high enough, and feedback does not always help pupils to improve their work.

The curriculum is shaped by a clear vision rooted in Gospel values and inclusion. Innovative approaches in Years 7 and 8, such as 'expeditionary learning', which involves project-based, real-world learning across subjects, including off-site visits, provide engaging and authentic cross-curricular experiences. In Years 10 and 11, pupils benefit from a balanced range of academic and vocational pathways tailored carefully to individual needs. Pupils in Year 9 do not have access to the full range of learning experiences required at this stage.

Provision for literacy is a strength. Many pupils read confidently, synthesise information from challenging texts and write effectively for a range of purposes. In numeracy, many pupils apply secure basic skills appropriately across subjects. However, planning for the progressive and consistent development of numeracy skills across the curriculum is at an early stage. Pupils also make suitable progress in developing digital skills. Provision for Welsh language and culture supports pupils to develop confidence and pride in their Welsh identity.

Care, support and guidance are strong features of the school. Effective pastoral systems, inclusive practice and well-targeted interventions support pupils' well-being successfully. Safeguarding arrangements are secure. Attendance has improved and persistent absence has reduced. However, despite focused support and appropriate use of funding, the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals remains too low.

The headteacher is supported well by senior leaders and governors. Together they have secured important improvements since the previous inspection, including in digital provision and financial stability, and have responded positively to national reforms. They have well-established self-evaluation processes. However, these do not always focus sharply enough on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning.

opy summary  
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# Recommendations and next steps

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## **We have made four recommendations to help the school continue to improve:**

- R1 Refine self-evaluation and improvement planning processes so that they focus more precisely on the impact teaching and provision have on pupils' learning and progress.
- R2 Ensure that pupils have access to the full range of learning experiences until the end of Year 9.
- R3 Strengthen the provision for the progressive development of pupils' numeracy skills.
- R4 Improve the attendance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals. Add in recommendations

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

## Full Report

If you would like to read more about Estyn's evaluation of the school, please follow this link to the [full report](#)

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