

Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School

Address: Old Oscott Hill, Kingstanding, Birmingham, West Midlands, B44 9SR

Unique reference number (URN): 103539

Inspection report: 14 April 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders and staff consistently promote the importance of high attendance. The school meticulously analyses trends and patterns in figures, especially that of groups of pupils, such as those who are disadvantaged. The school uses effective strategies to identify and support families to see the importance of regular attendance. The school provides high-quality support to many vulnerable pupils, including those that are at the school only for a short period of time, to improve their attendance. As a result, attendance across the school has improved markedly and is now at least in line with national averages and fewer pupils are persistently absent. Pupils want to come to school and enjoy attending.

Pupils' behaviour is impeccable. They are friendly, welcoming and a pleasure to speak to. Leaders have established a positive culture grounded in the 'Wiseman Virtues' that are lived by all. Staff enforce expectations consistently in the rare instances where this is needed and use any sanctions appropriately. The school's culture promotes mutual respect, tolerance and manners. There is a clear focus on positive behaviour reinforcement that pupils respond to consistently. Pupils enjoy being rewarded for their positive behaviour. Clear routines are fully embedded, making the school a calm and learning focused place to be.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

Leaders have a very detailed and accurate view of the education they provide. They use highly effective monitoring systems to ensure teaching meets their high expectations. Leaders swiftly identify any inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. They take skilful actions to effectively support any teachers to improve their practice. For example, through highly bespoke and targeted professional training.

The school has carefully designed its curriculum. There is a focus on pupils developing and securing essential knowledge. For example, in lessons, teachers break down key knowledge and skills thoughtfully. The school quickly identifies any gaps that pupils may have in their literacy and numeracy knowledge. Pupils benefit from highly bespoke catch-up sessions that help them to close these gaps.

Teachers know their pupils exceptionally well, including the needs of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers regularly and skilfully check what pupils can do. For example, through precise questioning and targeted assessment, teachers know what pupils have learned. All teachers have been trained to ensure that the individual needs of pupils are consistently met. They implement effective teaching strategies for all pupils regardless of their barriers to learning. This work is highly effective in supporting the learning of all pupils. Consequently, pupils achieve very well.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Inclusive practice is fully embedded throughout the school. Highly skilled staff ensure that pupils' needs are quickly and effectively identified and assessed. Staff receive clear and expert guidance on how to support pupils to learn well. For example, all staff have 'adaptive

teaching plans' that lay out the bespoke support each pupil may need in their lessons. Staff receive expert training on how to implement these plans and do so consistently in lessons.

Leaders have established a shared teaching approach that is designed with the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who are disadvantaged in mind. This means that pupils consistently receive the help they need to overcome any barriers to learning they may have.

Leaders' rigorous approach to monitoring pupils' progress identifies pupils who need additional support. Targeted support is put in place quickly for any pupil who needs extra input to close emerging gaps. This work is highly effective and supports pupils to achieve very well.

Leaders use additional funding, including pupil premium funding, to skilfully reduce the barriers some pupils face. For instance, leaders ensure that all pupils have access to high-quality resources and are included in all enrichment activities. Alternative provision is very well matched to the needs and aspirations of the small number of pupils who attend it.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leadership at all levels is inspirational. Leaders have a detailed and very accurate understanding of their school. They understand what is effective and why, and they continuously try to find out what may not work as well as they would like. Leaders use key research and up-to-date strategies to innovatively improve any provision that may not meet their high expectations. Leaders make decisions and take actions with pupils' best interests in mind.

The school has an excellent and extensive professional learning programme that ensures staff have the required knowledge, skills and expertise to support leaders' high expectations. As a result of this, many aspects of the school's provision have improved, including the achievement of pupils, quality of teaching, attendance and behaviour.

Governors fulfil their duties very well. They have a firm understanding of the school's strengths and further priorities. They play a vital role in driving continuous improvement in the school and supporting leaders to achieve the best for all pupils.

Staff are overwhelmingly proud to work here. All routinely live out the high expectations that exist. Staff value the bespoke and hugely extensive professional learning opportunities they have. They feel valued, listened to, involved in decision-making and part of the 'Wiseman family'.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is remarkable and highly effective. Leaders have developed their offer around their 'transformation curriculum' that is an entitlement for all pupils. Leaders place great emphasis on educating pupils beyond the classroom, so that they are exceptionally well prepared for life after school. The programme educates pupils about healthy relationships, respect and emotional wellbeing, for example. Pupils speak eloquently about what they have learned and demonstrate their knowledge in

their daily interactions at school. This work is highly effective in ensuring pupils gain the knowledge and skills they need to be successful citizens.

The school's impressive offer also includes a tailored, bespoke programme of extra-curricular activities that pupils choose themselves. All benefit from this offer because it is timetabled into the school week. Many activities lead to additional qualifications that pupils can use for their next steps, such as the 'Catholic leadership course'. Pupils relish the many opportunities they have to represent the school in their varying leadership roles. Leaders take pupils' suggestions on board and continuously broaden their offer based on feedback. For example, there is now a boxing club and all pupils are encouraged to choose an activity to carry out within the school community to 'give back'. As a result of this impressive offer, all pupils have high-quality opportunities that many otherwise would not have.

The school's work to prepare and inform pupils of possible career paths is of high quality. Leaders consider their context very well in this programme and have rightly focused on raising aspirations. All pupils have meaningful work experience as well as encounters with employers and higher education providers. All access impartial advice tailored to their circumstances and needs, including disadvantaged pupils. As a result of this work, pupils are exceptionally well prepared for further education, employment or training.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Pupils do well at this school. Their attainment is at least in line with national averages by the time they leave the school at the end of key stage 4. Pupils' achievement in English and mathematics is a particular strength. Across the curriculum, pupils develop the essential knowledge and skills they need for future learning. Strong and inclusive teaching ensures that disadvantaged pupils outperform their peers in national tests. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make suitable progress through the curriculum. Pupils secure the knowledge they need to move on to positive destinations.

While all pupils achieve very well, leaders' expectations that all perform above national averages are not fully realised. Leaders have acted decisively to address this. Teaching now routinely focuses on stretching and deepening pupils' learning further. While this practice is embedded, it has not led to above national outcomes for all groups of pupils, particularly those with high prior attainment.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils here attend an inclusive school that sits firmly at the heart of its community. Leaders have set high expectations and aspirations for all pupils. Pupils flourish here and the school routinely improves their life chances. The 'Wiseman Virtues' are lived by all and lead to a culture of belonging, care and achievement that permeates the school.

Pupils are confident that staff care about them. They feel safe and valued as members of the school community. Positive relationships between staff and pupils are commonplace and a pleasure to see. All understand the school's high expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct. Pupils consistently meet these and ensure that they support each other if needed. As a result, the school is a purposeful learning focused environment.

Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy learning. They show this through high attendance. They want to come to school and trust that staff will deal with any rare issues, including bullying, swiftly and effectively.

Teachers work skilfully to identify pupils who may face barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing. Highly effective support ensures that all pupils can access their learning. Pupils value this support and do well as a result.

Leaders have created their 'transformation curriculum' that focuses on educating pupils beyond the classroom, so that they leave ready and very well prepared for life in modern British society. For example, pupils learn about different cultures, healthy relationships and how to keep themselves safe. This work is highly effective and pupils gain in-depth knowledge about topical issues in their lives and wider world. The school's impressive offer is further enhanced with a bespoke programme of extra-curricular activities that pupils independently select. All pupils take part in these activities during dedicated time every Friday. As a result, all pupils access all the enriching opportunities the school has on offer.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to focus on high-quality teaching strategies to further deepen and stretch the learning of pupils, especially those with high prior attainment, so that all make rapid and sustained progress through the curriculum.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Deacon John Garvey.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior leaders, other leaders and staff at the school, including early career teachers. Inspectors held a telephone conversation with a representative from the diocese. Inspectors met with a representative of the local authority. The lead inspector met with a group of members of the governing body, including the chair and vice chair of governors.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved

technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school uses 3 registered alternative provisions for a small number of its pupils.

The school is a Catholic voluntary-aided school in the Diocese of Birmingham. Its last section 48 inspection was in February 2026 and the next is due in 2031.

Headteacher: Robert Swanwick

Lead inspector:

Bianka Zemke, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Guy Shears, Ofsted Inspector

Stewart Tait, Ofsted Inspector

Mark Sims, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 14 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

778

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

645

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

51.29%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

1.29%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

15.42%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	49.0%	45.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	46.4%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	32.4%	45.3%	Below

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	47.0	46.0	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	46.9	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	44.0	46.3	Close to average

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	0.27	-0.03	Above
2022/23 (final)	0.18	-0.03	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	38.2%	25.8%	Above
2023/24 (final)	36.7%	25.8%	Above
2022/23 (final)	26.2%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	40.8	34.9	Above
2023/24 (final)	41.1	34.6	Above
2022/23 (final)	40.8	35.0	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	0.00	-0.57	Above
2022/23 (final)	-0.12	-0.57	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (revised)	38.2%	53.1%	-14.9 pp
2023/24 (final)	36.7%	53.1%	-16.5 pp
2022/23 (final)	26.2%	52.4%	-26.2 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (revised)	40.8	50.4	-9.6
2023/24 (final)	41.1	50.0	-8.9

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	40.8	50.3	-9.5

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	0.00	0.16	-0.16
2022/23 (final)	-0.12	0.17	-0.28

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (provisional)	85%	91%	Below
2022 leavers (revised)	87%	93%	Below
2021 leavers (revised)	83%	94%	Below

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	8.3%	8.1%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	9.0%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	8.6%	9.0%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	26.9%	21.9%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	29.7%	25.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	28.6%	26.5%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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