



DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT

incorporating Section 48 and Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on
behalf of the Archbishop of Southwark

URN 118912

St Edmund's Catholic School

Old Charlton Road

Dover, Kent.

CT16 2QB

Inspection date: 11-12 December 2019

Chair of Governors: Mr John Philpott

Academy Principal: Mr Mike Wilson

Inspectors: Mr Tom Cahill

Mrs Eileen Watson

EDUCATION COMMISSION

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Director of Education: Dr Simon Hughes

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Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Edmund's is an increasingly popular mixed, 11-18 comprehensive Catholic school in the Dover deanery. It is part of the family of academies which forms the Kent Catholic Schools Partnership (KCSP). The school is located within the Kent Local Authority area which operates an extensive selective school system.

The school serves a number of parishes in the deanery including: St Paul's, Dover; Our Lady, Buckland; St Thomas of Canterbury, Deal and Our Lady Help of Christians, Folkestone.

The school also works in partnership with two other Catholic secondary schools as part of a cluster within KCSP. An executive principal supports all three schools but each school has its own academy principal. The cluster is overseen by one executive governing body with each academy having its own academy committee.

At the time of the inspection, the school roll was 507. The Sixth form provision has been suspended due to low pupil numbers and financial constraints. 25% of pupils are baptised Catholics, with the majority of other pupils being of other Christian faiths. Pupils come from over 25 different primary schools.

The school serves a large catchment area which includes very significant numbers of disadvantaged families and communities. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is well below the national average. 40% of pupils are eligible for pupil premium, which is well above the national average of 28%. A significant number of pupils join the school at times other than in Year 7 and some pupils are at the school for less than a year before they take public examinations.

The school was judged good in the previous Section 48 inspection in 2014 and has made rapid progress under the new leadership team. The school has addressed the recommendations made in the previous report.



SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Edmund's is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- Overall, the exceptionally strong Catholic ethos and moral purpose of the school provides outstanding pastoral care for all pupils, which ensures they are happy and safe.
- The very respectful behavior of the pupils and their very positive attitudes to learning make a significant contribution to creating an outstanding inclusive learning community for all pupils whatever their background or academic ability.
- Outstanding Catholic leadership provided by the Academy Principal and fully supported by all staff has transformed the school in recent years. As a result, the school's rapidly improving reputation is making the school increasingly popular amongst the local community.
- Consistently good teaching by Religious Education teachers and outstanding leadership of the department is raising standards and improving the outcomes of pupils.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

- Continue the upward trend of improving the outcomes of all pupils in Religious Education, especially for boys and those pupils who are more able.
- Continue the focus of developing 'Expert teaching everywhere' to increase the percentage of outstanding teaching within the Religious Education department.
- Increase the opportunities for pupils to participate in retreat experiences and provide more opportunities for pupils to experience the sacrament of Reconciliation within the school..

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Overall Effectiveness

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.

1

Catholic Life

1

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.

1

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

1

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

1

Religious Education

2

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.

2

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.

2

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

1

Collective Worship

1

How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship.

2

The quality of provision for Collective Worship.

1

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

1



CATHOLIC LIFE

1

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- St Edmund's is a highly effective Catholic school with an exceptionally strong moral purpose and commitment to all its pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. It is a truly Catholic school with a clear mission and option to support the poor and disadvantaged.
- Pupils benefit hugely from the exceptional pastoral care provided by all staff who have created a highly inclusive and happy school community where pupils feel loved and safe. One pupil who joined the school late in Key Stage 4 due to difficulties at her previous school told an inspector she was now very happy at St Edmund's. When asked why she was now happy and settled she replied, 'Because I feel loved here' and made clear that the school had enabled her to stay in full time education.
- Pupils made clear to inspectors that they very much value the hard work and commitment of all the staff who they feel always go the extra mile to support them every day. Pupils really do feel loved and cared for and know that if they have any problems, the staff will always be there for them. Pupils said that bullying is rare at the school and if it did happen, it would be dealt with swiftly.
- Pupils are outstanding ambassadors for their school. They wear their school uniform with pride. Their behaviour is impressive. They are polite and highly respectful both inside the classroom and around the school and this contributes significantly to the Catholic ethos that pervades the school.
- Pupils have opportunities to attend retreats to Aylesford and St Vincent's residential retreat centre in Whitstable. However, the school should review its retreat provision to ensure all pupils in each year group have an opportunity to participate in retreats.
- Pupils are provided with many opportunities to develop their leadership skills in a variety of ways including the school's prefect system. Prefects, when appointed, have a swearing of oath ceremony where they pledge to uphold the values of the school as expressed in the school's mission statement. This pledge includes a commitment to serve the school and to serve others including the local community and beyond.
- Pupils actively support a wide range of charities including Macmillan Cancer Care, Great Ormond Street Hospital and CAFOD. During the inspection, pupils were enthusiastically collecting goods and gifts for Christmas hampers to be given to those in need in the local community. The school also supports the local food bank. As a result, pupils are encouraged to help those who are less well-off even though many pupils come from poor and disadvantaged homes.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They praised the staff and leadership team for their dedication to the wellbeing of their sons and daughters. As one parent wrote, 'Such a caring school with each child being encouraged to shine. It has a wonderful family feel. Staff are helpful and kind and are committed to helping the children in every possible way'. Another parent said, 'I had visited many local secondary schools before deciding where to send my child. The other schools may have had shining new buildings but St Edmund's has a heart'. These views were echoed by all the parents who met with the inspectors.



- The school's House system has been recently reviewed and is highly effective in building community within the school. Weekly assemblies are delivered through the House system. Pupils respond enthusiastically to rewards such as house points and competitions such as those used to promote good attendance.
- Pupils also enjoy an impressively wide range of timetabled enrichment sessions each week. These include opportunities to participate in learning Mandarin, mindfulness activities and even horse riding. Some pupils visit local primary schools at these times to give service and support.
- The school is involved in an Erasmus Project linking St Edmund's and two local Catholic feeder schools with a Catholic International School. The school located in Rome has a Salesian charism. Pupils in all the schools have been exploring climate change and pupils have the opportunity to participate in exchange visits between Dover and Rome. The vision of Dom Bosco, 'It is not enough to love the young, they must know they are loved', is promoted by this project and fits well with the distinctive ethos of St Edmund's.

The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- This is a school that proudly proclaims its Catholic traditions. It has a number of beautiful icons, statues and imagery which contribute significantly to the spiritual development of the pupils and the Catholic life at the school.
- The school has created the space known as 'The Oratory' which is open at all times for quiet prayer and reflection by pupils and staff. The Blessed Sacrament is reserved in the Oratory which is situated at the heart of the Religious Education department. The main teaching space for Religious Education also has a large area which can be used for prayer and reflection, particularly during lessons.
- The school has developed and maintained strong links with local parish priests who are highly supportive of the school and its mission. They regularly attend the school to ensure pupils can attend weekly Mass and other liturgical services. They warmly welcome the pupils to their own parishes to celebrate Masses such as the annual patronal Mass for St Edmund of Abingdon which takes place every November. Good links with parishes also ensure that pupils are supported through the sacrament of Confirmation, with some pupils having confirmation lessons in school.
- A local parish priest acts as chaplain to the school. He is well supported by the lay chaplain and the extended chaplaincy team. This consists of other members of the Religious Education department and is supported by senior leaders.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- The Academy Principal provides inspirational Catholic leadership to the whole of the school community. His mission and message is one of hope and dedication to providing the best learning environment possible for the pupils. Despite the many challenges the school has faced in the past, he has ensured everyone in the school community feels safe and valued and, as a result, morale is high amongst pupils and staff.
- Leaders and governors have developed a clear mission and distinctive Catholic ethos which is known and fully supported by all members of the school community. Pupils and parents very much value the strong and all-pervading Catholic ethos even though the majority of students are not Catholic. The school clearly lives its mission everyday where



the gospel values of love, equality, justice, reconciliation, mutual respect and service lie at the heart of the school.

- Leaders ensure that all staff are actively involved in contributing to and enhancing further the Catholic life of the school. An annual staff spirituality day is held each year to further strengthen and support Catholic life.
- The school has created a 'Catholic Ethos leadership team' which has representatives from most subject departments and also the Academy Principal. It regularly reviews the Catholic life of the school and supports the school's development plans aimed at further improving Catholic life. The school has ensured that the responsibilities of team members are documented and well known and provides clear lines of accountability. It works closely with the Youth Ethos team.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate and fully endorsed by the inspection team. It shows clearly that leaders and governors know well the strengths and weaknesses of the school and what action is needed to bring about further improvements. Governors provide a strong blend of support and challenge to hold school leaders to account. They are making a significant difference, ensuring the school has excellent capacity to improve further.
- The Sex and Relationships Policy of the school has been reviewed and follows the diocesan guidelines.

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

2

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is good.

- Pupils enjoy their Religious Education lessons and told inspectors that they are making good progress because of the good teaching they receive. Their positive attitudes to the subject is reflected in their mature and respectful behavior in lessons and the excellent relationships they have with their teachers.
- Inspectors agree that pupils are making good progress, taking into account the ability and prior attainment of pupils when entering the school. Analysis of school data show that most pupils who join the school in Year 7 make good progress. Although national data is less strong, it does not take into account that the school admits many pupils into other year groups, including Year 11. A significant number of pupils also join the school as a result of managed moves from other schools. Often these pupils have not studied Religious Education beyond Year 9, if at all. A number of pupils are also placed on the school roll but attend alternative provision and these factors have a negative impact on the school's data. Inspectors agreed that this should be taken into account when analyzing national data for pupil progress.
- School data shows that results in Religious Education are now the same or better than other core subjects such as English and Maths and that this shows significant improvement since the last inspection. School data also shows that the progress of pupils at Key Stage 3 is rapidly improving which will have a positive impact as these pupils move to Key Stage 4. The school has correctly identified that the progress of boys and more-able pupils in Religious Education should be a focus for the department.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is good.

- Teachers of Religious Education are hardworking and dedicated to delivering well planned and interesting lessons which engage their pupils. They are very well qualified, have excellent subject knowledge and work as a team, sharing resources and ideas.
- The school's own self-evaluation shows that teaching is consistently good. Inspectors are in full agreement with this assessment. Teachers have the capacity and skills to ensure more teaching is outstanding, which will further increase pupil progress and outcomes. This should be a priority for the department given its strengths and teaching expertise. The school's policy of 'Expert teaching everywhere' will further support this enhancement.
- Assessments take place twice termly in line with school assessment policy. This ensures teachers have access to data to track pupil progress and to take appropriate action where pupils may be struggling. The department readily provides extra support and encouragement to pupils who may not be making the progress expected of them.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is outstanding.

- The time allocated to Religious Education lessons on the timetable exceed the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. This shows the very clear commitment of leaders and governors to the teaching of Religious Education, which is at the heart of the



school curriculum. The department has very good accommodation and is resourced as much as school finances will allow.

- At Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9), pupils follow a syllabus based on 'The Way the Truth and the Life'. At Key Stage 4 (Years 10 -11), the school follows syllabus A offered by Edexcel examination board using options covering Catholic Christianity and Judaism. The curriculum provided by the school therefore meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory.
- Leaders and governors have been proactive in developing and 'growing their own' Religious Education teachers. This has resulted in a fully staffed and stable department at a time when many Catholic schools struggle to recruit specialist teachers.
- The Academy Principal line manages the Religious Education department and the chair of the Academy Committee acts as link governor to the department. As a result, leaders know well the many strengths and few weaknesses of the department. The school has also been well supported by the diocesan adviser for secondary education.

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COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life is good.

- Prayer and worship lie at the heart of the school and pupils respond positively and respectfully to the many opportunities for prayer and collective worship provided. Prayers are recited each morning at assembly or in form time. Grace is said before lunch and the Glory Be at the end of each day.
- Pupils are keen to be involved as readers and servers as well as through music and dance. The Youth Ethos team plays an important role in helping to prepare liturgies as well as giving feedback to staff members of the Catholic Ethos leadership team.
- As a member of staff said, 'Mass here is beautiful. The pupils dance and sing and really get involved, even the head teacher dances'.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.

- Senior Leaders model and deliver high quality collective worship particularly through the weekly House assemblies and the planning for major liturgical events throughout the school year. In conjunction with the school chaplain, there is a full annual programme of Masses and other liturgical celebrations relating to the Church year, reflecting the vision of the school that Mass is the heartbeat of the community.
- In an outstanding House assembly seen during inspection, pupils were very respectful, with the majority showing high levels of engagement. The theme of the assembly was a focus on Advent and how the prophets had predicted the coming of the Messiah. A pupil (who was celebrating her birthday), was invited to light the candles on the Advent wreath. Readers placed amongst the pupil body stood to read relevant passages of the Bible. All pupils were invited to recite the prayer of St Francis and quietly reflected on the need for patience both in waiting for the coming of the Lord as well as in their daily lives. As pupils left, some pupils played music and one pupil sang and signed to the music. Some pupils in the hall spontaneously joined in the signing without prompting.
- Pupils spoke warmly about the impact on them of the patronal Mass celebrated each November with the most recent Mass displayed on the screen at the above assembly.
- Pupils sang joyously and fully participated in the celebration. Pupils also highlighted the liturgical dance performed by both boys and girls which reflected the message of the gospel reading.
- Provision is highly inclusive and takes into account the variety of beliefs followed by the pupils at the school. A notable feature of Masses at the school is that bidding prayers are read by Language Ambassadors in their mother tongue, giving a true feeling of togetherness.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.

- The timetable provides sufficient time for collective worship on a daily basis, either through House assemblies or form time, showing the high priority leaders place on this aspect of school life.



- Senior Leaders regularly lead prayer and collective worship or are present during these celebrations. The views of pupils and their suggestions on how to improve collective worship and prayer are discussed through the Youth Ethos team which meets with senior leaders.
- Governors are regular visitors to the school. They attend major liturgical celebrations and have an accurate view of the quality and impact of collective worship at the school.

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