

St Edmund's Catholic School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116505
Local Authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	379267
Inspection dates	20–21 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Joanna Beckford-Hall HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	885
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barry Wright
Headteacher	Simon Graham
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 34 lessons taught by 33 teachers, and five observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Vice Chair, and groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at minutes of governing body meetings, monitoring reports by the local authority, school policies, assessment records and students' work. Inspectors looked at responses to questionnaires completed by students, staff, and 123 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The progress made by different groups of students, particularly boys who join the school at National Curriculum Level 4 or above, and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Achievement in mathematics throughout the school.
- The effectiveness of the use of assessment in marking and feedback.
- The impact of strategies to raise attendance and reduce persistent absence.
- The capacity of the new leadership team to ensure further improvement.

Information about the school

St Edmund's Catholic School is smaller than the average secondary school. The large majority of students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is above the national average, as is the proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. A high proportion of students join or leave part-way through their secondary education. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is just below the national average.

The senior leadership team has been through a period of significant change. The school appointed an acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher in 2010. The new headteacher joined the school in September 2011.

The school holds the International School Award and was awarded humanities status in 2008.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to students' attainment, which has been too low for the past three years, their progress, and teachers' use of assessment.

- Attainment in mathematics has been persistently low. Attainment in English fell in 2009 and 2010 and was significantly below average. The proportion of students attaining five good GCSE grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics, was well below average in 2009 and 2010. It rose in 2011 but remained below the 2010 national average.
- Poor use of assessment has in recent years prevented students from making satisfactory progress during their time in the school. Lessons are not all sufficiently challenging and marking is not effective in accelerating students' progress. As a result, students' understanding of how they can improve their work and raise their attainment is insecure.

Nevertheless, the governing body has dealt well with significant turbulence in staffing, particularly at senior leadership level, and has played a key role in seeing the school through a considerable period of transition. The school has a good awareness of its strengths and weaknesses and this, together with the improvements already made, demonstrates that it has a satisfactory capacity to improve further. As yet, however, there is limited use of stakeholders' views in planning improvements.

- Strategies to strengthen teaching are now proving successful, with the result that almost all lessons secure satisfactory progress for students. The proportion of good and better teaching is rising quickly and teaching is occasionally outstanding, for example in English, French, religious education and geography.
- Leaders have successfully tackled behavioural issues, with the result that behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is good and students work well together in lessons.
- Strategies to raise attendance and tackle previously high rates of persistent absenteeism have been very effective; attendance levels are now average and the proportion of students who are persistently absent is low.

As a result of these improvements, while attainment remains low, more robust

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tracking and monitoring show that it is now rising to better reflect students' broadly average starting points. Despite some good progress emerging at both Key Stages 3 and 4, progress is inconsistent across subject areas and still weak in lower ability groups. This is because learning is too often teacher-led and lesson activities reflect low expectations of what students can achieve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement by the end of Key Stage 4 so that students' attainment meets the national average for five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics.
- Rapidly increase the rates of progress of all students by:
 - increasing the proportion of good and outstanding teaching throughout all departments by July 2012
 - deeply embedding effective use of assessment to ensure that planned work provides high levels of challenge in lessons
 - providing more opportunities for students to work independently and with others so they take greater responsibility for their learning
 - developing teachers' skills in providing high quality and challenging feedback, both verbally and in marking, so that students know exactly what to improve and how.
- Increase the involvement of all stakeholders, including students, parents and carers and staff, by systematically and regularly capturing their views and ideas to inform decisions about whole-school improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Students increasingly enjoy lessons. In good and outstanding lessons work is demanding and they are encouraged to learn both independently and collaboratively. In some lessons students showed they are highly articulate and willing to debate different perspectives about moral issues, spirituality and religion. Examples of good self-assessment and peer appraisal took place in physical education and in English where students showed they were learning how to improve their work. However, such practices are not embedded in teaching, often because teachers rely too heavily on didactic methods. There remains too much inconsistency in progress throughout the school and there are missed opportunities to develop students' independent thinking skills.

There remain variations in the progress of different groups but these gaps in achievement of particular groups are now quickly closing as a result of much more rigorous tracking of progress by all leaders. Lower-attaining students and middle-ability boys have made slower progress than others. Boys' learning is steadily improving in lessons, and lower attainers' progress is also improving but is still slowed by insufficiently challenging work. The progress of those who speak English

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as an additional language and looked after students often exceeds that of their peers because the support they receive has been carefully planned and matches their individual needs.

Most students have risen to new expectations about conduct and attitudes to learning. This is beginning to secure better progress in lessons. Inspectors observed an eagerness to learn and a major strength in the personal development of students is their good, supportive relationships. Leaders do not tolerate any form of discrimination and students say that instances of bullying are extremely rare.

Students understand and respect the needs of others. Most carefully consider how their actions affect other students. They extend a warm welcome to all visitors and new students to the school. Students comment that they use the chapel for reflection as well as prayer, a haven for dealing with personal issues. Weekly tutor group Mass helps all students celebrate the ethos of the school. Students are good ambassadors for St Edmund's.

Students feel safe and secure at school. They receive good guidance about personal safety, have a good understanding of current issues such as internet safety, and are well attuned to the dangers of social networking sites. They have a good awareness of diverse communities locally and internationally, successfully learning about many cultures and traditions through the international school links with France, India and South Africa.

Students have good opportunities to develop leadership skills through projects and key roles, often in school, and wider community fund-raising work. However, inadequate achievement, with often weak numeracy skills, means that the preparation for their future economic well-being is inadequate.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will	4

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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contribute to their future economic well-being	
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Inspectors jointly observed five lessons with senior leaders, coming to the same judgements. The primary reason why achievement is inadequate is the combination of a high percentage of inadequate and satisfactory teaching in recent years, coupled with a lack of incisive and detailed marking and use of assessment. Past weaknesses in systems for tracking students' progress and dissemination of data are still having an impact on the information available to teachers and hence on the use of assessment and students' progress. Teaching has some strengths, for example in the use made of resources, including information and communication technology and good use of probing questioning to extend students' thinking, particularly the more able. However, the quality of marking remains variable and students do not receive enough detailed guidance about how to improve.

Good lessons are characterised by work that is well matched to students' needs, the use of inclusive and probing questioning, and a demanding pace. In these lessons students successfully use criteria to give constructive feedback to help each other improve. Strategies to share such good and outstanding practice are, however, underdeveloped.

An improved curriculum since the last inspection supports the needs of students whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable, and who otherwise would not be attending mainstream education. Nurture groups, young carers groups, 'Motiv8' qualifications and apprenticeships are personalised and support the achievement of such students. These are sound strategies, but have not been running long enough to have had a full impact on the 2011 results. Extra-curricular opportunities are good and well attended.

The pastoral and spiritual guidance of students is a great strength of the school. Leaders are right to celebrate this. Transition arrangements for Year 7 students and those who join part-way through the school year are good. One parent wrote, 'Although my child has only recently started at St Edmund's I am delighted with the way the school has worked for a very smooth transition.' Good guidance for careers, post-16 education and employment is a success story in ensuring that no student leaves without entering education, training or employment. However, despite these pastoral strengths, care, guidance and support are no better than satisfactory because the impact of academic support is limited, and is not helping all students to reach their potential by Year 11.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

In the short time since his appointment and arising from his preparatory visits before joining the school in September 2011, the new headteacher has implemented a series of action plans to quickly extend improvements made by all leaders last year. The ambitious vision for the school effectively communicated by the new headteacher has galvanised staff to continue improvements. Restructuring of leadership teams and clarity of new roles provide leaders with greater opportunity to hold staff to account for the quality of learning in lessons. The focus on eradicating inadequate teaching has yielded benefits for this year, and the leadership of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

Middle leaders are involved in self-evaluation but department evaluations do not include precise enough targets to address inconsistencies in performance between student groups. The overhaul of the entire assessment system is helping leaders to take a more incisive look at key issues.

Working with the local authority the governing body took swift action to secure improved leadership of the school last year and took difficult staffing decisions. Until recently the governing body has not had sufficiently rigorous insight into the performance of specific groups. It upholds its statutory duties in respect of safeguarding ensuring that staff and students are safe and well cared for. Child protection procedures meet statutory requirements.

Communication and on-site work with parents and carers, especially for vulnerable students, has many good features, including parent meetings at the chapel for those dealing with difficult family issues. Weekly newsletters keep everyone informed of school events but a small minority of parents and carers who returned the Ofsted questionnaire wish for more guidance in knowing how to support their children's learning. While the views of parents, carers and students are sought there is no systematic use of their ideas to inform strategic priorities for school improvement.

Action taken to promote equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Leaders now have pertinent information about student groups and monitor attendance, personal development and, increasingly, their performance across the curriculum.

The school has a good understanding of the community it serves and the annual audit is used well by leaders to review students' understanding of diversity. Students

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develop many leadership skills in fund raising with the local parish through events such as the faith and football enterprise project, and they enjoy the international links with schools in Senegal and Ethiopia as part of the British Council Connecting Classroom scheme.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who completed the Ofsted questionnaire are very supportive of the school. Particularly positive comments were made about the success of Year 7 transition arrangements. A few raised concerns about behaviour. Inspectors investigated this through discussions with students as well as observing behaviour during the inspection, but judged that behaviour has improved and is now good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Edmund's Catholic School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 123 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 885 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	60	49	61	50	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	58	47	62	50	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	61	50	53	43	4	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	51	41	62	50	5	4	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	32	26	80	65	4	3	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	34	28	75	61	10	8	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	23	82	67	10	8	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	34	28	84	68	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	28	75	61	7	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	24	69	56	14	11	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	24	74	60	5	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	24	78	63	3	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	50	41	67	54	4	3	2	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 8 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



22 September 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of St Edmund's Catholic School, Portsmouth PO1 1RX

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we visited St Edmund's recently. We enjoyed hearing your views about the school. We were particularly pleased to see good behaviour in lessons and around the school. This is starting to make a better contribution to learning. You told us that over the last year St Edmund's has improved and we acknowledge that there are some good features at your school.

St Edmund's helps you to feel safe and lead healthy lifestyles. It enables you to make the most of the ethos of the school, and make a good contribution to the school and wider communities. You show good respect for each other and for different cultures and faiths, and successfully support new students who join the school. Most students take pride in meeting the higher expectations set by the acting headteacher and recently by Mr Graham. Attendance is improving. Fewer students are persistently absent. Inspectors saw some good progress in lessons and a few were outstanding. Leaders have developed better systems to monitor your progress; these are just beginning to drive up achievement.

Despite some good and improving features at St Edmund's, we judge that for too long students have not been achieving well enough, especially in mathematics. This means that overall effectiveness is also inadequate. We have given your school a 'notice to improve'. St Edmund's will be reinspected in a year's time. Inspectors are confident that because of improvements made last year and with Mr Graham at the helm, the following areas needing improvement can be quickly addressed.

- Raise the attainment of all students to the reach national average for five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics.
- Secure outstanding and good teaching in every subject to accelerate progress in lessons and over time.
- Use assessment information to consistently plan learning matched to the needs of every student, and ensure marking and feedback explain how to improve work.
- Regularly respond to the suggestions of parents, carers and students to determine how best to meet the priorities for school improvement.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Beckford-Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector

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