

St Edmund's Catholic School

Arundel Street, Portsmouth, PO1 1RX

Inspection dates 13–14 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school has improved quickly since its previous inspection because the headteacher, senior leaders and governors have been very effective in improving the quality of teaching and raising students' achievement.
- Staff are accountable for students' progress. They are well managed, receive good training and feel valued.
- There is rigour in the systems for making checks on students' progress and the quality of teaching.
- Good teaching and carefully planned extra help have accelerated students' progress. All groups now do equally well and those that were behind are catching up fast.
- Students behave well and show commitment to their learning. They are happy at school, feel completely safe and very well cared for.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although teaching is good overall some still requires improvement. Not all teachers use information about students' levels of ability to plan lessons which challenge students consistently.
- Students are not always clear about how their success will be measured in lessons.
- Marking does not always help students know how to improve their work.
- Some lessons do not provide enough opportunities for students to work things out on their own.
- Some leaders of subjects are still developing their leadership skills.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 40 lessons. Some observations were joint visits with a member of the leadership team. Inspectors also observed and talked with students at break and lunch times.
- The inspection team held meetings with staff, students, three members of the school's governing body, and representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 46 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and discussed parents' involvement in school life with senior leaders.
- The inspection team scrutinised examination results for 2012 and previous years, assessment records, the minutes of the meetings of the governing body and the school's improvement plans and evaluations.

Inspection team

Jacqueline White, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Karen Roche	Additional Inspector
David Wolfson	Additional Inspector
Daniel Brown	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- St Edmund's Catholic School is a smaller-than-average secondary school. There are more boys than girls in the school.
- The school holds specialist status for humanities.
- The majority of students are White British, but the number from minority ethnic groups is growing and is above the national average.
- English is an additional language for a higher-than-average number of students.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. (The pupil premium provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, children of parents serving in the armed forces and for students known to be eligible for free school meals.)
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is above that found nationally. The number of those supported through school action, school action plus and with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The school meets the current floor standards, the minimum standards set by the government for students' attainment and progress.
- Some students in Key Stage 4 combine vocational courses at local colleges with their work at St Edmund's.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2011 just before the school's previous inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all lessons are good and more are outstanding by ensuring:
 - all teachers use information about what students know and can do to provide activities which are well matched to students' different levels of ability and challenge everyone to achieve their best
 - marking gives students precise feedback about how to improve their subject skills and teachers check that they are responding to the advice given
 - students are clear about how success will be measured in lessons so they can judge how well they are doing for themselves
 - there are more opportunities for students to learn on their own and find out things for themselves.
- Share further leaders' skills and expertise in what works well so that all subject leaders are equally expert in making checks on the work of their teams and the quality of teaching and learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Most students come into the school with average standards. Underachievement in recent years is being tackled robustly. Students are now making good progress including in English, mathematics, science and specialist subjects. In the last two years attainment has risen rapidly.
- A trend of improvement has been secured in the proportion of students achieving five higher-grade GCSEs including English and mathematics. Performance is now broadly in line with the national average. The school's reliable data show that the acceleration in students' progress will be maintained.
- The growing number of students from minority ethnic groups and those from White British backgrounds achieve equally well.
- Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding make good progress because resources are used creatively to support their well-being and achievement. Students receive extra tuition and bursaries to open up opportunities that will enrich their educational experiences. Their attainment and average point scores are rising and increasingly closer to those of their classmates, particularly in English.
- The curriculum, which offers vocational courses at local colleges, has been developed to provide students with clear pathways into work, training or further education. A measure of its success is that almost all students achieve these goals. The progress of students who attend college courses for part of their time is carefully checked. Students are motivated by their chosen courses and achieve well in them.
- Students' attitudes to learning have improved considerably. Most demonstrate a good work ethic and a willingness to take more responsibility for their learning.
- The school has highly effective programmes in place to help students develop their literacy skills. In a session observed, Year 7 students were making excellent progress and enjoying developing their reading and discussion skills. Students have productive opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in many subjects. Students for whom English is an additional language make at least good progress because of well-planned individualised support and a commitment to ensuring they participate fully in learning activities in lessons, including through the use of home languages.
- Sensitive and carefully considered support for disabled students and those with special educational needs helps these students to make good progress. There is a clear understanding of these students' needs and staff work closely with parents and other agencies to ensure they are met.
- The school has been successful in working to close the gap between boys' and girls' achievement so that it is now less than that found nationally.
- Students are entered early for GCSE English. The strategy has been used in the best interests of students and does not limit their chance of achieving the highest grades.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching has improved markedly since the previous inspection. Much good, and some outstanding, teaching was seen in the inspection. Most teachers have high expectations of what students can do. Consequently, progress is speeding up and students are getting better examination results.
- In the best lessons, teachers use their good subject knowledge well to deepen students' understanding. High-quality resources are used very effectively to support learning and provoke students' curiosity. Tasks are creative, well sequenced and designed to get students to think hard and work things out for themselves. Teachers manage time and their classes well. There is a high level of trust underpinning respectful relationships and this inspires students to take risks

and express themselves with confidence.

- In a Year 10 dance lesson, the teacher gave precise detail about what students needed to do to secure the challenging learning objectives. As a result, students were able to highlight strengths and weaknesses in performance skills with accuracy and insight. They were able to pinpoint how they could improve their individual performances. This clarity about what was expected to be successful, which helped students to make excellent progress, is missing in some lessons.
- Where lessons require improvement, it is usually because the match between learning activities and students' ability is not tight and accurate enough. So, for some the work is too easy and for others it is too hard.
- There is variation in the quality of marking both within and across subjects. There is some good practice where teachers clarify how students can improve their subject skills and check that they follow the advice given. However, too much marking just confirms what students can already do.
- Some lessons are too teacher led and opportunities for students to find things out for themselves and work on their own are missed. Where students receive extra help, to catch up or develop particular skills, teaching is very effective.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students, staff and parents agree that behaviour has improved even further since the previous inspection. Students are typically considerate, polite and cooperative. Exclusions are decreasing and there are now very few.
- The school has effective policies for managing any behaviour that does not meet the high standards expected. If students have particular emotional or behavioural difficulties, time is spent developing programmes and strategies to help individuals overcome problems and make the most of the opportunities that the school offers.
- There is a fervent commitment to bring the best out of students and this is ingrained in the high-quality care offered by pastoral teams and the chaplain. In day-to-day routines and relationships, it is evident that every student is greatly valued. Students from all backgrounds and faiths work and socialise together happily. Their strong sense of belonging is reflected in their improving attendance which is broadly average.
- Students say they feel very safe in school. The parents who responded to Parent View were unanimous in their agreement that the school keeps their children safe. Incidents of bullying are few and far between and students have full confidence in staff to sort out any problems that might arise. Students were clear that the use of racist or homophobic language is rare and this is confirmed by the school's records.
- Students are taught through the curriculum, tutor time and assemblies how to keep themselves safe both inside and outside school. The many extra-curricular activities are not only enjoyed but help students to develop leadership skills and good judgement. More and more students are grasping opportunities to take on responsibilities by becoming subject and sports captains and by standing for election to the student council.
- Students have excellent opportunities to reflect on their place within the global community and how as individuals they can help to make the world a better place. They appreciate that people are different, have a strong sense of right and wrong and a genuine desire to support their school's improvement and those less well off than themselves.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides strong leadership. He is ambitious for the school and wants it to become outstanding as quickly as possible. His clear vision of a high-achieving school is shared by staff who have welcomed sharper accountability.
- The senior leadership team supports the headteacher well and works cohesively with him to

drive improvement. Leadership has been strengthened at all levels. There has been an intense focus on getting the leadership of core subjects right. Now the priority is to ensure that all subject leaders are equally expert at improving the work of their teams and the quality of teaching and learning.

- The school has been resolute and effective in tackling poor performance. Teachers know they are answerable for students' progress. Governors and senior leaders use information about students' progress and the quality of teaching to decide whether teachers should be paid more.
- The quality of teaching is rigorously checked through regular observations and in-depth reviews of subject teams. Where weaknesses are identified, teachers are coached in the improvement of specific skills. Training is of a high quality and linked to whole-school priorities for improvement. The appointment of 'teaching champions' (selected for how well they teach and support learning) to share skills and expertise in what works well and develop best practice is helping to increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching.
- The school has a robust and accurate view of its own performance. It is underpinned by the regular scrutiny of reliable information about students' performance in subjects.
- The revised curriculum is responsive to students' needs. In Key Stage 3, it gives greater scope for creativity and, in Key Stage 4, it is more flexible with increased choice for students. The recent developments, combined with the rich variety of after-school activities, have deepened students' enjoyment of learning and support their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.
- The school has worked hard and successfully to improve communications with parents and support their involvement in their children's education. Feedback from Parent View is very positive overall with most parents who took part saying they would recommend the school to others.
- Procedures for safeguarding meet all current requirements.
- The local authority and the diocese have coordinated their support for the school very well. They have provided resources and an objective perspective that has helped senior leaders to maintain the momentum of improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well organised, ambitious and strongly focused on raising students' achievement further. Governors bring a complementary skill mix to the work of challenging and supporting senior leaders. They do both conscientiously and effectively. Through appropriate training they develop their skills, and detailed reports from the headteacher and other leaders give them a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Regular visits to see the school in operation and discussions with leaders allow them to test this information. Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching and how the school's performance compares with schools nationally. They share a determined commitment to ensuring that students do equally well and they keep a close eye on the performance of different groups. Governors manage the school's finances astutely and evaluate how the use of resources benefits students. For example, they make sure pupil premium funding supports the eligible students and secures their good progress.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	116505
Local authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	399690

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	823
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barry Wright
Headteacher	Simon Graham
Date of previous school inspection	20–21 September 2011
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