

St Edmund's Catholic School

Arundel Street, Portsmouth PO1 1RX

Inspection dates 2–3 February 2016

Overall effectiveness **Outstanding**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher is resolutely determined that all pupils have the best possible education, whatever their circumstances. He has instilled high aspiration in all leaders, teachers and pupils.
- Outstanding leadership at every level characterises this school. All leaders feel fully accountable for the progress of all pupils. They accurately identify pupils who are not performing at their best and swiftly intervene to secure improvements. Effective team working ensures that no pupil is overlooked.
- Relationships are strong. The underlying culture of respect and kindness for all underpins every element of pupils' experiences. They are appreciative of the support they are given and very keen to learn.
- Teachers are skilful at ensuring lessons are carefully matched to what pupils need to learn. This means that no pupil is left behind and over time all make strong progress. Every individual is catered for effectively.
- The curriculum is tailored to match the aspirations and interests of all pupils. The breadth of pupils' experiences, supported by an extensive extra-curricular programme, leaves pupils very well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences are highly developed and are an impressive feature, thoroughly preparing pupils for life after leaving the school. The school's chaplaincy makes a significant contribution to pupils' well-being, which is as well supported as pupils' academic progress.
- A strong focus on teacher development has resulted in outstanding teaching over time. Consequently, teachers are highly knowledgeable about how pupils learn and plan meticulously to help pupils improve. This unwavering commitment to improving teaching is accelerating improvements for pupils.
- Through carefully targeted and monitored provision, disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are rapidly catching up with their peers.
- The pupils' exemplary conduct around the site is matched by outstanding attitudes to learning in the classroom. Pupils are eager to develop their knowledge and understanding, and then use this to further improve their work.
- Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive in their support for the school. They identify the pastoral support pupils receive as one of the school's many strengths.
- Governors bring their experience and total commitment to the best possible outcomes for all pupils to effectively challenge and support leaders.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the progress of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, and pupils with English as an additional language, is tracked and monitored as meticulously as that of other pupils, such that:
 - teachers have rich information about how best to support these pupils to excel
 - the expertise of specialist staff is used to help teachers plan for even stronger progress for these groups
 - the impact of pupils' additional language lessons is fully evaluated.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher's unwavering focus on improving outcomes for all pupils inspires staff, pupils and parents alike. Ably assisted by senior leaders, the headteacher's vision for outstanding provision has come to fruition as a result of careful planning and steadfast leadership. Leaders' work is characterised by exemplary monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of their actions in improving outcomes for all pupils. As a result of this meticulous scrutiny leaders have a robust and accurate picture of the school and know its strengths and weaknesses well. Leaders react with alacrity to address any dips in subjects or groups.
- Leaders have ensured that training for teachers is closely focused on improving outcomes for all pupils. Consequently teachers are acutely aware of the need to plan for pupils to gain knowledge and secure understanding.
- Literacy has been effectively developed by leaders through a whole-school approach. This promotes pupils' use of language, oracy (the ability to express oneself fluently and grammatically in speech) and technical vocabulary and has been thoroughly assessed to evaluate the difference it is making to pupils. Pupils' literacy is promoted effectively by leaders at all levels. Middle leaders ensure that the school's policy for providing feedback to pupils about how to improve their work is adhered to in all subjects. Pupils are given useful opportunities to write for the school's magazine, *The Eagle*. Planned activities to promote numeracy effectively support pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts and terminology.
- Leaders assiduously track and monitor pupils' achievement. As a consequence any underperformance is quickly identified and pupils receive rapid individual support through their tutors, subject teachers or specialist intervention to arrest decline.
- Senior leaders are effectively developing the skills of middle leaders. As a result, middle leaders feel fully accountable for the progress of pupils and they work as a team to improve teaching and learning. Robust monitoring holds them to account and through the support and challenge this offers they strive for constant improvement.
- The school's curriculum is fundamental to driving improvement. It reflects and supports pupils' interests and aspirations. Well-designed pathways provide pupils with suitable routes into education and training after Year 11. These are supplemented by additional opportunities to study courses such as engineering or health and beauty. The most able are stretched by options such as astronomy and additional mathematics, and those requiring additional support are offered study skills or core subject options.
- Disabled pupils, pupils with special educational needs and pupils with English as an additional language make very strong progress as a result of outstanding teaching. However, information about their progress is not always readily accessible to teachers to help them plan lessons which enable these pupils to achieve even more highly.
- Fundamental British values and personal, social and health education are woven into the curriculum and pervade the life of the school. As a consequence, equal opportunities are fully promoted and upheld. Intolerance of any form of prejudice is prevalent and pupils are insistent about the rights of all to be treated as equals.
- The school uses a wide variety of strategies to engage parents and seek their views, valuing their contributions and indicating an openness to scrutiny to secure further improvement. Governors take opportunities to meet parents informally as well as collecting regular survey information to keep them informed about the views of parents.
- The pupil premium funding (additional funds provided by the government), and the impact this has on disadvantaged pupils, is rigorously tracked and evaluated to see the difference it makes. This information is used to make best use of the funds. Eligible pupils are offered a bursary and given an opportunity to have a say in how best to support their learning.
- Pupils are well cared for and the school's work to keep them safe and secure is outstanding. Leaders' actions are grounded in deep knowledge of individuals and draw on appropriate external support as required. Vulnerable pupils are extremely well supported and those who are educated off site are protected by clear protocols. Deaf pupils are closely monitored and care for their well-being clearly demonstrated to be foremost.
- The local authority has provided helpful support by developing leaders' skills to sharply focus on the areas for improvement and evaluate the impact of their actions.

■ The governance of the school

- Governors are highly knowledgeable about the strengths and areas for development at the school. While they work in close partnership with senior leaders they also provide scrutiny and challenge. For example, leaders are called to account for their work on a regular basis and governors pay frequent visits to the school during the working day to evaluate the impact of leaders' actions.
- Governors are very well informed in a timely fashion by the school and have a great deal of information available to them. This is used to enable them to take an active role in promoting standards.
- Governors have been anxious to ensure that attendance rates improve and scrutinise attendance information at every meeting. As a consequence they have used their detailed knowledge to exhort leaders to ensure persistent absence declines.
- Governors are knowledgeable about the quality of provision and work closely with the headteacher over decisions about pay progression, ensuring that these are closely linked to pupils' progress.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Governors pay close attention to the school's work on safeguarding. They are well informed about the strength of the school's procedures and check regularly that systems are effective, ensuring that a culture of keeping pupils safe is thoroughly embedded.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Teachers meticulously plan to support pupils to improve their skills, knowledge and understanding. As a result almost all pupils make outstanding progress. Pupils know precisely what they need to do to improve and consequently are confident in tackling more demanding work.
- Work is set at an appropriate level to challenge the most able, support those who need extra guidance and engage all pupils in stimulating activities. This high-quality provision has led to a rapid acceleration of learning.
- Teachers use questioning highly effectively. This deepens pupils' understanding and ensures that their knowledge is secure because teachers are checking frequently what pupils know. They step in quickly to address misunderstandings or gaps in knowledge.
- The most-able pupils, pupils with special educational needs, deaf pupils and those with English as an additional language all benefit from high-quality, challenging teaching. Consequently pupils are fully engaged in their learning and keen to improve.
- Pupils have a secure understanding of how to improve their work. They take responsibility for reflecting deeply on their teachers' feedback and that of their classmates. As a result, their work improves. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and in return pupils are willing to rise to the challenge. Pupils are highly motivated by lessons which encourage them to work things out for themselves and build on each other's understanding.
- Teachers are keen to extend their professional practice. They regularly share ideas, discuss techniques and draw on wider expertise in order to drive pupils' learning forward. For example, teachers are using body language and facial expressions to enhance communication for deaf pupils.
- The school's systems to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are well developed in lessons. For example, accurate technical terms are used extensively through a range of subjects and pupils are expected to correct spellings as a matter of routine.
- Teaching assistants work in close partnership with teachers to help pupils progress. They question pupils carefully and ensure that they are clear about the work set so they can get on quickly and not fall behind.
- The commitment of teachers is evident in their passion for their subjects and their pupils. Inspectors were told frequently by pupils how much teachers helped them and how they valued the feedback teachers gave them.
- Teachers take every opportunity to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils in science were debating the merits of nuclear power and in history they were discussing the treatment of Jews in the ghettos of World War Two.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupil's personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils benefit from a wealth of social, moral and spiritual experiences which are built into their day-to-day lessons and wider school experiences. A culture of care permeates every aspect of school life, enhanced by the work of the school's chaplaincy, which encourages pupils to reflect and develop concern for others. Pupils' personal qualities are developed alongside their academic achievements. Pupils are rewarded for the personal qualities they display, such as community contribution. Pupils take on a wide range of leadership roles such as being reading ambassadors or supporting the wider school community, developing their self-esteem and fostering strong links with that community.
- Pupils take obvious pride in their work. Books are neatly presented and evident care is taken to keep work tidy.
- All groups of pupils get on well together and there is no intolerance. Pupils report that bullying is almost unknown, and dealt with swiftly on the rare occasions when it occurs. As one parent commented, 'the children thrive and use their different backgrounds to enrich the cosmopolitan feel of the school.'
- Pupils are knowledgeable about healthy living. In food technology lessons pupils could explain about the consequences of consuming too much fat and sugar.
- The attendance rate for all pupils is improving as a result of a determined focus by leaders and is now at the national rate. The number of fixed-term exclusions has decreased markedly as leaders have implemented alternative methods of educating pupils in a city-wide initiative.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is outstanding. Pupils are aware of keeping safe online and the concerns posed by cyber bullying. Pupils have been involved in discussing radicalisation and all staff have had recent training on extremism. The school works with local partners to deliver specialist lessons for pupils, covering drug education, healthy eating and emotional health and well-being, ensuring that pupils have accurate information.
- The extra-curricular provision is as diverse as the interests of the pupils and ranges from Dr Who club, through fencing, book club and chess club, offering pupils a vast range of opportunities for personal development.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision have their attendance and welfare checked on a regular basis and achieve well.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. A culture of high expectations of pupils' conduct is evidently well established, highly effectively managed and respected by pupils. Pupils understand the behaviour system thoroughly and consider that it is applied fairly and consistently. Rewards and consequences are used to reinforce expectations and pupils are very motivated by the system of collecting badges to highlight their achievements and contributions.
- Pupils consistently demonstrate positive attitudes to their work and a determination to improve. They display strong learning habits and a resilience in tackling tasks, even in the face of setbacks. They are highly supportive of one another and accept and act on the advice peers give them about improvements to their work.
- Pupils regulate themselves extremely well around the site showing consideration for others at all times. They are polite and helpful, frequently offering assistance to adults and each other.
- Pupils take good care of the school environment. The vibrant wall displays of pupils' work, celebrations of their achievement and materials to support learning are all in very good condition, even in corridors which are very busy at times. Inspectors saw no litter or graffiti around the school.
- Pupils adhere to the school's behaviour systems in an exemplary way and there was no disruption to learning witnessed during the inspection. The logs of pupils' behaviour indicate this is typical.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- In 2015 the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics has been above national levels, despite pupils entering the school with broadly average levels of attainment. This represents outstanding progress for this cohort of pupils. Pupils currently in Year 11 are confidently predicted to make similar progress according to the school's information.
- Pupils have attained the English Baccalaureate, for the second year running, at a higher rate than is seen nationally. The numbers of pupils gaining the higher A* and A grades also rose this year because of high

expectations, excellent teaching and strong personal motivation to succeed.

- Rates of progress of pupils in English were well above average and in mathematics, and across all subjects are above average. The proportions of pupils who make more-than-expected progress in English and mathematics is above national averages. For disadvantaged pupils the gap is closing and these pupils are now making progress on a par with other pupils at the school.
- The school's own information indicates that pupils in all year groups and across all subjects are making outstanding progress from their starting points. There are no groups who are falling behind.
- Disabled pupils and pupils who have special educational needs are supported very well. They make progress in line with their peers and this is improving over time because there is a well-planned programme of support and intervention. Teachers bolster pupils' progress and ensure that they keep pace with their peers. The school's own information supports forecasts of further improvement this year.
- Deaf pupils make strong progress because of specialist support and highly effective teaching. Judicious use of signing ensures that pupils do not fall behind in lessons. Teachers are fully aware of the social and academic needs of deaf pupils.
- Pupils with English as an additional language make very strong progress because of close support in class and highly effective teaching. However, their progress is not centrally tracked in the same meticulous detail as that of other groups in the school. As a consequence, they are not pushed to make more than expected progress. Teachers work well with teaching assistants to meet their needs.
- Pupils who enter the school with low literacy and numeracy rates levels are making strong progress. By Year 9 all have caught up in English and the vast majority in mathematics. Progress in literacy overall is outstanding because of targeted promotion of core skills in all subjects. Numeracy is similarly developed across the whole school and effectively woven into lessons, furthering pupils' mathematical knowledge.
- Pupils who attend training providers are following appropriate courses well suited to their requirements. These courses allow pupils to develop supplementary skills and knowledge alongside their core curriculum. The school is in regular contact with providers to ensure that the pupils' attendance and progress are monitored.
- Pupils benefit from effective, independent careers advice and guidance. This ensures that pupils are extremely well prepared for their next steps into education or employment. Year 11 pupils have ambitious plans for their futures and are very clear about how to get there.

School details

Unique reference number	116505
Local authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	1001010

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	830
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Knight
Headteacher	Simon Graham
Telephone number	02392 823766
Date of previous inspection	13–14 December 2012

Information about this school

- St Edmund's Catholic school is a smaller-than-average secondary school.
- Higher-than-average numbers of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and the percentage of pupils whose first language is believed not to be English is more than double the national average.
- The percentage of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (extra government funding) is higher than is typically seen.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities is above that found nationally.
- The school has resource provision for pupils with hearing impairment.
- A small number of pupils attend off-site provision at Highbury College or local training providers.
- The school met the current floor targets, the minimum standards set by the government for pupils' attainment and progress in 2014.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils in 29 lessons in order to contribute to their evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Three of these observations were conducted jointly with members of the school leadership team. Inspectors also observed three tutor periods and an assembly.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, members of the governing body, senior leaders, teachers, a representative of the local authority and several groups of pupils and the school's chaplaincy.
- Inspectors reviewed provision for deaf pupils and the school's inclusion unit.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation including that relating to: policies; the minutes of governors' meetings; annual review and strategic planning documents; self-evaluation documents; pupil achievement; behaviour and attendance information and a wide range of pupil work.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed in two letters from parents, 45 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as 41 responses from parents on Ofsted's freetext service.

Inspection team

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