



# St Edmund's Catholic School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 116505  
**LEA** Portsmouth LEA  
**Inspection number** 279845  
**Inspection dates** 14 June 2006 to 15 June 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Martyn Rhowbotham HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Arundel Street
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Portsmouth
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		PO1 1RX
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	02392823766
<b>Number on roll</b>	915	<b>Fax number</b>	02392871874
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Dr Janet Quinlan
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	29 November 1999	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Isabelle O'Mara

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	14 June 2006 - 15 June 2006	279845

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

St Edmund's Catholic School is situated in the densely populated inner city Charles Dickens ward in Portsmouth. It is the only maintained secondary Catholic school in Portsmouth. The intake has changed recently to include more non-Catholic pupils and attainment on admission is lower than at the time of the previous inspection. Currently about half of the pupils are baptised Roman Catholic. About 85% of pupils are White British. The school has five major primary feeder schools, but accepts pupils from around 11. This oversubscribed school has a strong Catholic ethos.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school judges its overall effectiveness as good but inspection evidence shows it to be satisfactory. Achievements and standards are now satisfactory following a recent decline. There remain some variations in performance in different subjects. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress and the school is well placed to meet its challenging targets.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. There are positive relationships between staff and pupils. Parents and carers are positive about the school, though a few have some justified concerns about minor disruption in lessons. Pupils are supported well and they feel safe. They report that any instances of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively. There are very high levels of temporary exclusions which result in a high proportion of pupils missing some of their education.

Teaching is satisfactory overall but planning does not always take sufficient account of pupils' abilities, resulting in variable progress. Some lessons lack clearly focused objectives and have slow pace. Pupils' performance is assessed rigorously and they know how well they are doing. The curriculum is satisfactory but more changes are needed so as to meet the needs of all pupils and improve achievement.

Although there are now good procedures to review and evaluate the school's work there remain some inconsistencies in judging its effectiveness. This has been partly due to significant problems with the recruitment of staff, however, the situation is now much more stable. The headteacher and the senior management team work well together and with the rest of the staff. The school provides satisfactory value for money. Initiatives are beginning to have an impact especially in English but more remains to be done to achieve consistency of practice between all subject managers. There are hopeful signs reflected in improving standards in some subjects which indicate the school's capacity for improvement.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Lift the quality of teaching, making sure that lessons are well planned and match the needs of pupils with different abilities, have better pace and clear objectives.
- Ensure that there is greater consistency between leaders and managers in tackling the school's priorities and in identifying more accurately its strengths and weaknesses
- Review the behaviour management policy so as to reduce the impact of temporary exclusions.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. Pupils join the school with average standards. Pupils work hard in most lessons and are aware of their targets. They speak confidently about their work and most know what they need to do to improve. By the

end of Year 9, standards are above average in English and average in mathematics and science. During their first three years in the school, lower attaining pupils, those with learning difficulties and disabilities and those with English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress. Progress for some middle attaining pupils, and higher attaining boys, has been slower than for other groups of pupils. The school has put in place measures to tackle this and evidence in pupils' work shows that these actions have been effective.

In 2005, the proportion of students gaining 5 or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C fell from its previously high level and the school did not meet its challenging targets. The school has taken appropriate measures, focused on improving pupils' progress and raising achievement, to address this decline. Standards of work are now average at the end of Key Stage 4, and pupils' progress is satisfactory. The school is now well placed to meet its challenging targets.

There is some variation in pupils' performance across subjects. For example, in 2005, GCSE results were significantly higher than average in design and technology, English literature and geography. They were weaker in English language, mathematics, and history. The school has experienced some difficulty in recruiting teachers in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) but staffing is now much more stable.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good. The social, moral and cultural development of pupils is good overall. A particular strength is pupils' spiritual development, where the chaplaincy plays an important role. Pupils respond thoughtfully and with maturity to the good opportunities they are given to reflect on a wide range of important issues, such as poverty in developing countries. They are very aware of the needs of a range of people around the world and how their efforts in fund-raising can make a difference to the lives of others. Pupils enjoy warm and respectful relationships. They care for each other and treat each other with consideration and respect. They work well together in lessons and participate in a good range of additional activities. Pupils communicate confidently with each other and with adults. Older students support younger ones well by taking the role of prefects and through the peer mentoring scheme.

Behaviour is generally good both in lessons and around the school, although pupils are occasionally slightly boisterous in corridors between lessons. The level of temporary exclusions is also high. Punctuality is good. Attendance is very slightly below the national average. Unauthorised absence is below the national average. Some pupils and parents express concern that a few lessons are sometimes affected by minor disruptions, although this is usually in response to uninspiring teaching which fails to engage pupils' interest.

Pupils generally enjoy school and have a good understanding of the importance of safe behaviour and work practices and understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle but some admit that their eating habits do not always reflect this. Pupils know the

importance of taking part in physical activities and many pupils play a range of sports very enthusiastically in the playground at break and lunchtimes. Some pupils feel that there is insufficient time given to physical education in Years 10 and 11. Preparation for pupils' entry into the world of work begins in Year 7 and this work is built upon satisfactorily throughout their school career. Standards of literacy and numeracy are satisfactory and pupils have sufficient opportunities to participate in work-related activities.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. There are positive relationships between staff and pupils in most lessons. Pupils respect each other and work well together. Behaviour is generally good especially in response to challenging and interesting teaching. Lessons usually begin punctually and there is a calm atmosphere in most lessons. In those lessons with specific objectives, pupils are clear about what they are going to learn and how they are going to learn it. Teachers have planned interesting and progressive activities that successfully build on what pupils already know and what they have learnt earlier in the lesson. They use a range of appropriate teaching methods and they check pupils' learning and progress frequently. Pupils work hard in these lessons. They enjoy them and often achieve well. Assessment is effective in providing pupils with advice on how they can improve their work but information on individual pupils is not always used well to inform lesson planning.

In the less effective lessons, the activities set in the lesson often do not motivate pupils successfully. There is a lack of variety and the lessons often progress too slowly. They often do not have clear objectives and the endings to some lessons are very rushed. These factors hamper pupils in consolidating their learning effectively and limit opportunities for teachers to see if learning outcomes have been met. There is too little attention given to individual pupils' abilities. In these lessons there is often some low level disruption and pupils spend too long not working on the tasks set. As a result, some pupils do not achieve to their full potential. There is a wide range of ability in some lessons and pupils are clear about their levels of attainment and their targets but teaching does not always take this into account. Learning support assistants (LSAs) support pupils well in lessons. They are particularly effective in monitoring and tracking the progress of those with learning difficulties.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. The school has recently reviewed the curriculum in order to take account of the pupils with a very much wider range of abilities than previously acknowledged. The recent introduction of vocational courses and apprenticeship schemes has contributed to the curriculum better meeting

the needs of most pupils. However it is too early to judge the impact on attainment. Further changes are planned for next year for example in the provision of GCSEs in vocational subjects and ICT in years 10 and 11. Recently introduced courses in practical subjects such as hairdressing and construction are provided in partnership with a local college and these are now beginning to raise pupils' awareness of career choices. Pupils in Year 7 have more contact with individual teachers. This has a positive impact on the pupils' attitudes to learning and their progress in lessons.

Provision for literacy and numeracy is largely effective in raising pupils' achievement and the school holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark. These skills, together with work-related learning opportunities for older pupils, lay the groundwork for their future economic well-being. Provision in citizenship, personal, social and health education helps to develop pupils' understanding of safe and healthy lifestyles. All pupils have access to a range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities to support their enjoyment and achievement. The school analyses participation rates and uses the outcomes to encourage all pupils to take part. Pupils make a positive contribution to a wide range of art and sports events, including the Portsmouth Book Award.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Overall the quality of care, guidance and support is good. There are good procedures for child protection and staff training in this is updated regularly. Pupils feel safe and well cared for, knowing that adults working in the school are approachable and will listen to them, and work to resolve any difficulties. There is a varied range of support for pupils who are identified as being in need of extra help and, where appropriate, this support is extended to their families or carers. The school makes good use of a large number of outside agencies in order to make support as comprehensive as possible. The way that some groups of pupils have been trained to support others is a particularly good feature. However, the school is using an insufficient and inflexible range of strategies to manage behaviour. This results in a very high level of temporary exclusions. Some parents have expressed concern about this policy, since it means that too many pupils are missing too much time from school.

Because teachers make good use of marking and other strategies to offer feedback and advice, pupils have a very good understanding of their targets and what they need to do to reach them. They show a lot of interest in their own progress. They are offered good support in making option and career choices.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory, with some good features. The headteacher joined the school in the autumn term of 2004. She gave priority to building an open, collaborative culture, in order to provide the foundations for sustained improvement. This has led to the development of a positive learning environment, where people are valued and where there is a strong focus on the care and personal development of

pupils. The headteacher recognised that student attainment and progress in the very recent past was inadequate. She therefore set a clear direction for the school, tackling underachievement with energy and determination. She is well supported in this endeavour by a committed and talented senior management team. Together, they have galvanised the staff to work together to raise achievement, in order to andquot;be the bestandquot;. These strengths illustrate the school's capacity to improve.

The school seeks the views of pupils to inform planning of change.,. Clear, systematic procedures for review and evaluation have been put in place, although there are inaccuracies in the school's overall self-evaluation. Some heads of departments now use data more effectively to track pupil progress, and to ensure that pupils know how to continue improving but this practice is inconsistent and leads to variable progress in different subjects. There have been some good developments in the leadership of English which are making an impact on standards but more needs to be done to ensure improvements in other subjects.

Governors take a close interest in the performance of the school and they are fully aware of its strengths and weaknesses. They provide a good balance of challenge and support. They are directly involved in monitoring and evaluation, and they have produced an action plan for their own activities, and to improve their own effectiveness.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

### **Pupils**

As you know, we recently inspected your school. You probably saw us around the school and we may have visited one of your lessons. Some of you came to meetings with us, where you were very good at telling us about your work and your progress. You also told us what you like about school and what you thought could be improved. You were very polite and helpful during the inspection and were particularly good at giving us directions when we got lost! We were impressed with your behaviour in lessons and around the school. Some of your parents or carers filled in confidential questionnaires which we took into account when reaching our judgements. You all made an important contribution to the inspection and we would like to thank you very much for that.

The main strengths of the school are: • the good relationships you have with teachers • how most people behave well in most lessons and your good behaviour around the school • the way you support and care for each other • the clear targets for your work that you have in most subjects.

So as to improve further, the school needs to: • improve the planning and pace of some lessons • make sure that all staff at the school understand how well it is doing and take a full part in helping it to get even better • look at ways to helping you to manage your behaviour. Mrs O'Mara has some really good plans to achieve these things. You can help a great deal by attending all of the time and continuing to behave well and work as hard as you can in all of your lessons. Thank you again for all your help in the inspection and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Martyn Rhowbotham

Her Majesty's Inspector