



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and Inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48
of the Education Act 2005

URN 118912

St Edmund's Catholic School
Old Charlton Road
DOVER Kent
CT16 2QB

Inspection date: 16 & 17 September 2014

Chair of Governors:	Mr John Philpot
Executive Head:	Mr Markus Ryan
Head of School:	Mrs Catrina Hamilton
Inspectors:	Mr Damian Fox Dr Janet Croggon

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SECTION 48

Introduction

Description of the school

St Edmund's is a mixed, voluntary aided comprehensive Catholic school in the Dover Deanery. The school is in Kent Local Authority which operates an extensive Grammar school system.

The school serves eight parishes in the deanery: St Paul's, Dover; St Finbarr's, Aylesham; Our Lady, Buckland; St Joseph's, Cheriton; St Thomas of Canterbury, Deal; Our Lady Help of Christians, Folkestone; Virgin Mother of Good Counsel, Hythe and St John the Evangelist, Mongeham and Sandwich

Throughout 2013 the school received support from both the Diocese and the LA. There is a new Executive Headteacher who is the Headteacher of St Thomas More, Eltham. The Headteacher is also from St Thomas More.

At the time of the inspection, the school roll was 599, including 46 in the 6th Form. 194 pupils (34%) are Catholic. 444 are white British. There are 40 Roma pupils and 58 white Eastern Europeans.

Date of previous inspection:

15–16 October 2009

Overall Grade:

2

Key for inspection grades

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

St Edmund's School is a good Catholic school. There are outstanding features and also an area for significant development. It is a good school because of the changes made in the last 12 months and also because of the clear, detailed plans for developing and sustaining this improvement. The responses from parents and pupils are evidence that the plans are active and working.

The recommendations from the last Section 48 in October 2009 have not fully been addressed. The school is presently governed by an Interim Executive Board (IEB).

Over the last year the school has made significant progress under the excellent leadership of the Executive Headteacher and the Headteacher, both of whom have a clear vision for the staff and pupils. Their commitment to improving the learning of the pupils, their investment in and plans for rebuilding a Catholic presence in the school and in the area reflect their determination to make St Edmund's an outstanding Catholic school. This is shared by the IEB and is recognised by staff and pupils.

The pupils have responded very positively and in discussions told the inspectors how much they appreciated the care and commitment of the senior staff. The Head Girl, who had experienced all the changes, commented on a new sense of caring for each other. A Year 11 pupil who transferred to the school said: "I didn't realise what a loving and caring school it was." Year 11 pupils said that Religious Education lessons were now more enjoyable and varied. Pupils felt safe and the behaviour in lessons, and around the school, was so much better now. One parent commented on the Christian beliefs which "feed into the caring ethos of the school."

There was an obvious growing pride among staff and pupils.

The area for development is embedding the progress in re-establishing the Catholic faith and practice in the school. Pupils felt "less confident" in how the school is doing this.

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

The IEB, Headteacher and staff should:

- Continue the professional development of the Religious Education Subject Leader to ensure the teachers of the subject are mentored and coached more effectively.
- Ensure that Religious Education teachers are helped to improve their teaching with particular emphasis on differentiation, group work and challenging higher ability pupils.
- Consolidate the progress already made in rebuilding the Catholic life of the school by: establishing a regular programme for Masses, prayer and retreats; launching the planned Chaplaincy team; encouraging pupils to contribute to the planning of liturgy; involving more pupils in collective worship; ensuring all pupils experience off-site retreats; establishing a range of charities as a focus for each House or year group; making arrangements for the chapel to be open for private prayer.

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

The school has begun to provide a range of opportunities for pupils to benefit from the Catholic life of the school. Its impact is manifest more obviously in the relationships between all members of the school and in the courteous and friendly manner of the pupils.

After a period when the Catholic life was less evident in the school, there is a new Chaplain, who has detailed plans to provide regular spiritual and enriching experiences. There are now six priests who have begun again to visit the school to celebrate Mass. There are plans for all pupils to attend Mass.

Morning Prayer, started by the Chaplain, is now established in all form rooms at the start of the day. A Year 11 pupil informed inspectors that prayer is said also before lunch and at the end of the day. There have been charity collections in the past, notably for the Air Ambulance and especially for the local food banks. There is a chapel but it was not clear how the school would provide access for private prayer throughout the day.

Although there are activities, inspectors found that pupils were not able to articulate an awareness of a regular and established programme of faith experiences. They did not see their involvement in preparing and contributing to collective worship as part of their lives in the school.

Inspectors felt that the pupils were already responding positively to progress and that now focussing on the spiritual and liturgical should be a major priority.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

Although outcomes in Religious Education improved from 23% to 52% A* - C in 2014, they are below the national average. They are also significantly below English (63%) and Maths (65%).

For 2013-2014, the number of pupils achieving 3 levels of progress was 52% (E 76% and M 68%). 4+ levels of progress was 27% (17% and M 23%).

The changes made in lessons to ensure higher standards of learning are recognised by pupils. They reported that over the past year, staff have stayed in the school and have created a more conducive learning environment in lessons. They appreciate the variety of teaching styles and are far more engaged. Behaviour has improved a great deal which is helping them learn and enjoy their experiences in the classroom.

A Year 11 class said that they were far more confident of achieving A* - B now than they were two years ago.

The work in exercise books was generally neatly presented and showed they were taking pride in their work.

How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship

The school chapel has been moved away from a busy, recreational area to a quieter and potentially more reflective space. Inspectors felt that being part of an extended classroom would restrict its use for private prayer and group reflections.

The new Chaplain and the priests are all committed to providing more effective provision in the school. They have begun to work regularly with staff and pupils. Pupils said that there were prayers in class and that there were assemblies and Masses. They showed reverence in their participation.

At the time of the inspection pupils did not feel part of liturgical planning nor expected to contribute on a regular basis.

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils

The Executive Headteacher and the Headteacher have had a major impact on the task of rebuilding the Catholic life of the school. They have detailed and extensive plans for ensuring that Gospel values and Catholic practice permeate every aspect of St Edmund's. One priest described their leadership of religious life as outstanding and that "they have consistently done the right thing." The Executive Headteacher has plans of which he approves. Another priest said that the Leadership had a "strong Catholic vision."

They have supported the Subject Leader on his leadership course and have instituted regular observations and learning walks. With senior leaders they ensure that the Catholic life of the school is becoming the heart of the school.

The Subject Leader has new staff, including two trainees, and he is developing a cohesive and effective team. The Headteacher is his Line Manager and monitors his work and the quality of teaching and learning through observations, meetings and analysing data. The exam analysis, for example, was detailed and reliable.

There is a new Chaplain who is implementing a new action plan for the spiritual and liturgical life of the school. It is beginning to bear fruit. There are now regular Masses and established Morning Prayers. The staff had their own Mass at the beginning of the year. They have Morning Prayer every Monday morning. Year 9 will have a spirituality day with the Southwark Catholic Youth Service. House Masses will be reintroduced to occur on a regular basis.

Pupils have referred to charity collections but they are not embedded into school life. The Chaplain aims to formalise activities to raise awareness and money for CAFOD and Demelza House, a children's Hospice.

The inspectors' view was that although there is evidence of a growth of the Catholic life, the plans needed more short term achievable goals as well as the three year plan in order to make it easier to monitor and evaluate its impact.

The Chair of the IEB has a clear vision for and commitment to St Edmund's. As a former Catholic Headteacher, he knows what is required to improve Religious Education and Catholic life. He is the Member of the IEB responsible for them and monitors them regularly with the senior team. He is a frequent visitor to the school. In April 2013 when the IEB was set up, the Chair was the only Catholic member. There are now three Catholics on a larger body. Improved behaviour and results reflect the impact of the leadership of the school.

How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement for improvement to outcomes for pupils

Leaders and the Chair of the IEB monitor the Religious Education department through regular Lesson Observations and Learning Walks. They analyse all assessment data and

the plans for further development. The Subject Leader is becoming more experienced in leading a department and he has been instrumental in the effectiveness of Teaching and Learning. The staff feel supported by him. He liaises with the Chaplain to ensure that the faith is manifest beyond the classroom. There is clear line management. The Chair takes responsibility for the Religious Education of the school and line manages the Headteacher. The Headteacher line manages the Subject Leader and all aspects of Religious Education.

The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

The quality of teaching provided by the Religious Education staff is good overall. Inspectors observed eight lessons. One lesson was good with many outstanding features. Four lessons were good with a suggestion that the teaching could become outstanding. Three lessons required improvement, although two of these were at the top end the band. In the better lessons all pupils were engaged by the learning experiences provided. There was a variety of teaching styles within the lessons and pupils responded well to these. Pupils made good progress. Where lessons required improvement, there was not enough evidence of differentiated work. In one Year 7 class, there was too much teacher talk and little challenge beyond knowing the story of Creation.

Overall, Inspectors felt that behaviour and engagement were good and that good progress was made but that some pupils were allowed to be passive learners and were not encouraged or motivated to participate in their learning.

The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning

At KS3, the school follows 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' programme.

At GCSE, the school has recently changed modules to cover Unit 3, Religion and Life, and Unit 8, Religion and Society. The new modules were introduced to respond to the needs and interests of the pupils. These changes contributed to the increase in A* - C in 2014 to 52%.

In the 6th Form, there is a small group studying A level. The school runs the NOCN General Religious Education course for the 6th Form.

Across the school, the time allocation meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. At KS4 it is 11.6% which, with improved teaching, has resulted in an improvement in outcomes.

These measures, along with increased number of Masses, prayer and retreats are contributing to the spiritual experiences of the pupils.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

Inspectors visited one assembly and four form periods. Two form periods were outstanding because they were reverential and reflective with all pupils involved. Pupils participated in all periods and in one, led the morning prayers. The other two periods and the assembly were good. One Year 11 pupil confirmed that there is a reflection and prayer every morning. They follow the programme of themes and prayers which have been introduced by the Chaplain. At the time of the inspection, the Beatitudes were the source of their collective worship.

Inspectors felt that the school should now allow pupils to prepare and contribute more to collective worship as there is no routine involvement of pupils. Involving music and singing should be considered as a way of enhancing the liturgy.

