



St Edmund's Catholic Secondary School

URN: 141217

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Southwark

11–12 June 2026

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

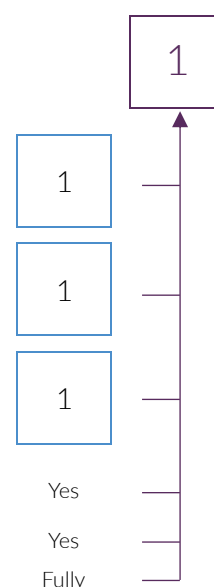
Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection



Compliance statement

- Religious education is taught for a specified portion each week and constitutes at least 10% of the taught curriculum time at KS3 and KS4.
- The school is fully compliant with additional requirements of the Archbishop.
- The areas for improvement from the previous denominational inspection have been addressed.

What the school does well

- Pastoral care is exemplary and staff care passionately about every student, especially those that are vulnerable.
- It is a safe and happy learning community, inclusive and welcoming.
- Students very much enjoy their religious education.
- Leadership and governance throughout the school is a strength.
- Student leadership in liturgical formation is strong and inspirational.

What the school needs to improve

- Raise the percentage of grade 4 and above in GCSE RE in line with other core subjects.
- Explore opportunities to engage parents in prayer and liturgy.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

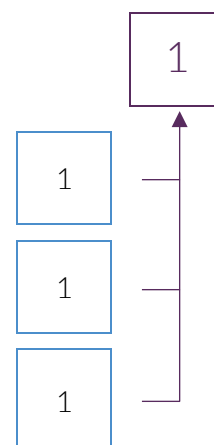
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school



Students feel highly valued and loved at St Edmund's. They understand and embrace the distinctive Catholic identity, charism and mission of the school. Their active participation in the Catholic life of the school is significant, especially members of the chaplaincy student team. These positive and energetic students demonstrate a full and active commitment to ensuring that assemblies and other services are engaging and purposeful. As a result, all students greatly value the chaplaincy provision and its contribution to Catholic life and mission, evident throughout the school. Students have a clear understanding of the charism of their house saints, for example students were able to speak in depth about St Kolbe and St Cecilia. Students speak confidently about Catholic social teaching. In their student led assemblies, including those led by the chaplaincy group, they clearly explain themes such as the common good, solidarity and the preferential option for the poor. One student said that their knowledge of Catholic social teaching, 'helps you to live and contribute to the wider world'. This is lived out in charitable work, and the students are particularly proud of their contribution to the Dover Food bank. Their behaviour is exemplary and the respect shown to all members of the school community is clear.

The mission statement, which is regularly reviewed and lived out, is fully embraced by all. Staff are wholly committed to the school and actively engage in the mission. They describe the school as being an authentic reflection of a community rooted in Gospel values, a school of love, encouragement, solidarity and growth. There is an exceptionally supportive and inclusive environment and a strong sense of welcome at St Edmund's. Staff are exemplary role models for students in their relationships of love and care. The pastoral care is strong; students feel safe and are safe. There is a nationally recognised and distinctive, trauma-informed, relational approach that embodies Gospel values. The notice boards, classrooms, and house identities, are an effective witness to the Catholic character of the school, along with how Catholic social teaching is promoted. There is a dynamic and well-planned chaplaincy programme, providing high-quality opportunities for all. One staff member commented, 'St Edmund's is a family; the sense of community and belonging is strong here, more so than any

school I have worked at'. The relationships, sex, and health education curriculum is well thought out, follows Church teaching and fulfils statutory requirements.

Leaders and governors can clearly articulate the Church's mission and strive to fulfil this daily. Governors show a strong commitment to the school; they visit regularly and are a driving force for school improvement and quality. Parish links are well established, and leaders ensure regular opportunities for Mass and liturgical events. Parents praise the values and the opportunities given, with one parent saying, 'St Edmunds is inclusive, supportive and caring.' Another said, 'I cannot speak highly enough of the school and the staff.' Leaders and governors are inspiring examples of Catholic social teaching in practice. Their ambition for the school, informed by love and care, is palpable. Staff wellbeing is promoted and staff greatly value leaders' contributions to this. Self-evaluation is rigorous and honest, involving all staff and governor challenge. Students are given opportunities to evaluate Catholic life and mission, and they are empowered to make improvements and suggestions. Professional development is offered to all staff on 'working in a Catholic school'. For new staff, this is delivered through taster days, documentation and advice, with new staff reporting a confidence and awareness of what it means to work in a Catholic school. A member of staff said, 'The staff body is respectful, and everyone is treated with dignity and kindness. Staff are always there for support.'

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

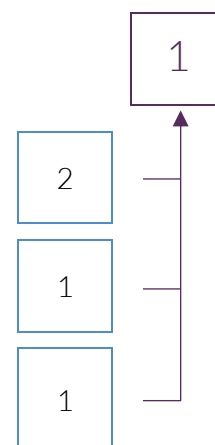
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education



Students thoroughly enjoy Religious Education lessons and make good progress. The *Religious Education Directory* is fully embedded and is enhancing students' religious literacy. The religious education leader has prepared resources with their own students and adaptive teaching in mind. Religious oracy is evident in every lesson with many opportunities for students to use their ideas and apply Church teaching to their lives. Lessons are well sequenced, and through scaffolding are accessible and allow opportunities for independent learning. Student engagement is good and therefore behaviour for learning is excellent. They are passionate about the subject and can see how it applies to their lives outside school. One parent stated, 'My daughter loves RE. Her teachers are impeccable and she has formed great relationships with them'. Phone call Friday is a celebration phone call to parents/carers of students who have shown improvements, and as a result, students are well motivated. Whilst outcomes in grade 7, 8 and 9 are comparable with other core curriculum subjects, there is work to do to narrow the gap at grade 4 and above. In the last three years significant progress has been made to achieve this. Students are very clear about how they are progressing in religious education with assessment grids and feedback for every topic, giving them the knowledge and skills on how to improve.

Teachers demonstrate a high level of confidence and strong subject knowledge and have high expectations for both student engagement and outcomes in RE. All but one RE teacher is a specialist teacher and all are supported effectively. Lessons are well planned, and materials are designed to take prior learning and ability into account. Teaching is expertly responsive and adaptive, informed by a deep knowledge of students' needs, including trauma-informed strategies. Within lessons, there is both effective questioning and a focus on challenge. This enables students to extend and deepen their learning of key concepts, such as requiem and the funeral rite. In a Year 8 lesson, students were able to define the Triduum, and through the support of well-crafted resources, were able to convey how the Church enters into the Paschal mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. Time is given for purposeful reflection, and outcomes are celebrated and rewarded. RE plays a strong role in the holistic development of the students, evident by the students' engagement and understanding of the subject.

The *Religious Education Directory* is fully embedded and religious education has parity with core subjects. The school has well maintained subject specific classrooms sparking curiosity, focus and connection. Staffing, timetable allocation and budget are on a par with other core subjects. Staff are provided with effective and continuous professional development that focuses on subject knowledge and resourcing. The subject leader has a clear vision for the department and demonstrates expertise, enthusiasm and support for the team. He is an inspiring and committed role model and leads by example in his practice, preparation and enthusiasm for his subject. St Edmund's is a highly inclusive school in which students of all abilities and backgrounds can access the curriculum. This leads to a strong culture of reflection and student voice, enabling learners to articulate progress and take ownership of improvement. The religious education curriculum is supported through enrichment, including mission week, regular visits to religious sites and retreat opportunities. Self-evaluation is accurate and shows evidence of regular monitoring and strategic planning. The monitoring is collaborative leading to a reflective and developmental approach to improving teaching. The link religious education governors are a supportive and proactive voice in this planning. They are integral to promoting the best outcomes for all students.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

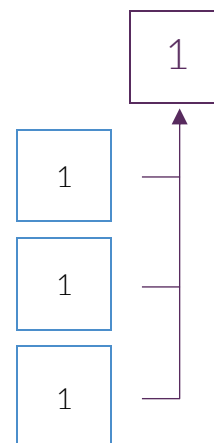
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship



Students' experiences of prayer and liturgy engage them deeply and lead them to full and active participation. It is inclusive and follows a structure that embeds an authentic expression of the Catholic faith. It is transformative, shaping the spiritual and emotional life of the whole community, embracing students of all faiths and none. The variety of practice includes subject specific prayer, readings, reflections, drama and celebratory singing. Students can articulate how this supports them across the curriculum and the wider life of the school. For example, they can describe how their singing leads to calm, focus and reflection. Students lead, working collaboratively with the chaplaincy team to deliver prayer and liturgy with confidence. It is received with respect and reverence by all. Students reflect on the quality and provision of prayer and liturgy regularly and this leads to a confidence and culture in which they can plan and deliver high-quality celebrations of the word. In an assembly they were able to articulate the theme of stewardship with visual presentation, drama and music. They had a core message that, 'the world is God's gift, let's share it fairly' and 'small actions by many people can change the world'. This demonstrated an authentic and moving encounter with prayer resulting in a tangible sense of Christ's presence. One staff member said, 'Our community love celebrating the word together. Our students are very proactive with stewardship and looking out for those in need'.

Prayer is central to the rhythm of the school day. It is deeply embedded through subject prayers, which are evident in every lesson. Prayer and liturgy are central and transformative, shaping the spiritual and emotional life of the school community, and used in significant moments of joy and sorrow. All celebrations of the word are student led and embrace traditional Catholic practices using well-chosen scripture to enhance the spiritual experience and theme. Worship reflects a rich integration of creativity, reflection and inclusion, supporting mental and spiritual wellbeing. Staff are inspiring models of exemplary practice and participate fully. The chapel is central to school provision, reflecting both students' art and creativity, and their passion for justice and peace. The students have produced their own Stations of the Cross, and the chapel is very much a student centred, friendly and sacred space. Close links with the parish and regular visits from clergy to say weekly Mass are a supportive presence to staff and students alike. One member of staff said celebration of the word is 'by the

students and for the students'. However, opportunities for parents to participate in the liturgical life of the school requires strengthening.

The policy on prayer and liturgy is accessible and comprehensive and evidenced throughout the school. Staff and students use this policy to build both their skills and confidence to deliver and lead prayer and celebration of the word, in a reverent and respectful way. Students and staff are given the opportunity to attend Mass on holy days of obligation and other significant days. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered weekly during the liturgical seasons of Advent and Lent. Non-Catholics are also welcome to attend should they wish to speak with the priest. Leaders, including the chaplains think deeply about the preparation of prayer and liturgy ensuring full participation so that prayer is seen as a meaningful, respectful and sacred experience for all. Time and resources are allocated to ensure effective and consistently high-quality prayer and liturgy. Leaders and governors are fully appraised and knowledgeable about how prayer and liturgy is embedded and through self-evaluation continue to strive to make these experiences fulfilling and spiritual for students and staff. A staff member summed it up by saying, 'St Edmund's is a very special place and produces socially aware young people who have a strong sense of service to the community in which they live'.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Edmund's Catholic Secondary School
School unique reference number (URN)	141217
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8864013
Full postal address of the school	Old Charlton Road, Dover, Kent, CT16 2QB
School phone number	01304201551
Headteacher	Grainne Parsons
Chair of governors	John Philpott
School Website	www.st-edmunds.com
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	11-12 December 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Ciaran Graham	Lead
Bernie Woodcock	Team
Bridget Durrant	Team

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement