

St Edmund's Catholic School

Compton Park, Compton Road West, Wolverhampton, WV3 9DU

Inspection dates 17–18 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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 focus on making sure that all students develop essential skills in subjects and as individuals, are at the heart of the school's success.
- Students achieve well in the range of different subjects they study. They are now making better progress in science.
- Disabled students, those who have special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language also do well. All groups of students take a full part in the life of the school.
- Teaching is good. Lessons are lively, teachers have good subject knowledge and students who need extra help are well supported.
- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress and this is improving. They are prepared well for taking the next steps in their education or for working life.
- Students behave well in lessons and around the school. They learn in a respectful and harmonious environment which helps them feel safe.
- The headteacher and other leaders, including governors, have high expectations of how well students should achieve and develop as people. They have taken good steps to make teaching better and this is continuing to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress for all students and groups of students is not excellent. There has been some variation in how quickly students made progress in some subjects.
- Teaching does not always ensure students develop their skills to work things out for themselves or present the highest level of challenge for the most able students.
- Students' skills in writing are not developed consistently in all subjects.
- Not all leaders of subjects and areas are fully effective in their roles. However, this is improving quickly.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 41 lessons. Some observations were joint visits with a member of the leadership team.
- The inspection team held meetings with staff, students and three members of the school's governing body.
- Inspectors took account of the 13 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), looked at the school's own surveys of parents and carers and spoke to one parent by telephone. They observed other aspects of the school's work and analysed 28 staff questionnaires.
- The inspection team scrutinised examination results for 2012, assessment records, the minutes of the meetings of the governing body and the school's improvement plans and evaluations.

Inspection team

James McNeillie, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lesley Voaden

Additional Inspector

Sa'ad Khaldi

Additional Inspector

Janet Bird

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St. Edmund's is a slightly smaller than average-sized secondary school with a sixth form.
- The school holds specialisms in mathematics and computing.
- The majority of students are from White British backgrounds. The remaining student population is made up of Asian or Black British heritages. A higher than average proportion of students has English as an additional language, with a few who are at an early stage of learning English.
- There is a slightly higher than national proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals and therefore supported by the government's additional pupil premium funding.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is below that found nationally. The number of those supported through school action, school action plus and with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school works in partnership with two local schools, S. Peter's Collegiate School and Wolverhampton Girls' High School, to offer students a range of courses in the sixth form.
- New school buildings are due to open in September 2013 as a result of the school being part of the *Building Schools for the Future* project.
- St Edmund's most recent GCSE results met the government's floor standard, which is the minimum level expected for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of day-to-day teaching so that more is outstanding by ensuring that:
 - teachers give greater attention to the development of students' independent learning skills
 - lessons help the most able students to make even better progress
 - students receive regular and helpful feedback on their written work in all subjects
 - teachers help students to write precisely, confidently and accurately in all subjects
 - there are even more opportunities for teachers to learn from observing and sharing the excellent teaching that already takes place.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The quality of students' learning is good. They settle to work quickly and most are able to work sensibly and well whether on their own or in groups.
- Students make good progress in a range of different subjects, including in English and mathematics. Progress in science has improved. Achievement in modern foreign languages has been particularly strong.
- The proportion of students achieving five GCSEs including English and mathematics at grade C or above has risen steadily and is above the national average. The overall measures of students' attainment, known as capped average points score, is significantly above average.
- The most able students also achieve well, although not enough of them attain A* and A grades. However, this is improving.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress. In part, this is because of early identification of their needs and good support in lessons.
- Those students who have English as an additional language make quick progress. Good approaches used by teachers and the additional support available to individuals means that these students can take a full part in lessons.
- Students from White British, Asian and Black British heritages do equally well. School leaders ensure that the progress of students from different heritages is tracked carefully, and so can ensure good equality of opportunity.
- Students known to be eligible for free school meals achieve well. Gaps between this group of students and their peers are narrowing quickly. For example, in 2012, this group of students made more progress in English than in previous years. Their overall levels of attainment, which the government measures by 'average points score', has been significantly higher than similar students nationally, and higher than those of the rest of the year group. Extra lessons were provided in English and mathematics as well as sessions to help this group of students to develop a range of learning and personal skills.
- Students' achievement in the sixth form is also good. Students in Year 12 are now making quicker progress. Significantly more students continue onto A-level courses than has been the case previously. Almost all leave the sixth form to continue in education or training, or to start work.
- Students use their reading, writing, communication and mathematics skills well in a range of subjects. For example, students can apply their mathematical knowledge well in science; and in history and geography lessons they use key words of the subject accurately. However, students' extended writing in subjects other than English is not as precise, confident or technically accurate as it could be. Teachers do not always do enough to support this.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers have high expectations. Students are made to work hard and quickly in lessons and

classroom relations are good. As a Year 7 boy said, 'Lessons are fun, we know that the teacher is interested in what we do and this makes us want to work even harder'.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons to make sure students get involved. In a Year 10 information and communication technology lesson, one of the school's specialisms, students worked well together to understand how satellite technology helps motorists find their destinations. Year 13 students studying English were observed working exceptionally well in groups when analysing texts.
- In lessons, there is a good level of support for students of different abilities and with different needs. For example, in a mixed ability history lesson the teacher and the teaching assistant kept a careful eye on lower ability students and those learning English as an additional language, giving them additional help when needed. In a GCSE English lesson, the teacher encouraged more-able students to think creatively and independently when choosing how to categorise the types of words used in a poem.
- Teaching supports students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, in religious education lessons, students reflected thoughtfully on problems of evil and suffering and on the moral messages in Psalms. In geography, they developed a good understanding of people's different reactions to recent natural disasters.
- When lessons are too much dominated by the teacher, for example by talking for too long or giving insufficient time for discussion, there are fewer opportunities for students to develop the skills they need to work things out for themselves.
- In some lessons, there are missed chances for teachers to offer more challenge to the most able students.
- Students receive some excellent regular written feedback which gives them specific ways to improve. However, this is not the case for all students in all subjects.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students behave well in lessons and their conduct at breaks and lunchtimes is good.
- When behaviour is less than good, which is rare, it is due to students not listening to the teacher's instructions and, at times, silliness.
- Students feel safe and their parents and carers agree. Peer mentors are appreciated by students. Younger students and those who joined the school during the year described how the caring and welcoming atmosphere helped them to settle quickly and feel secure. Lessons and assemblies help students to understand risks, including those associated with social media, and how to keep safe.
- Students learn as part of a harmonious community where young people of different faiths, cultures and backgrounds get on very well together.
- Bullying is rare. Students can speak with confidence about what bullying means, its different forms and how to tackle it if it does occur.
- Exclusion rates are below average and falling. The school's 'St Clare's Success Centre' has had a good impact on helping to manage students who do not meet the school's high expectations.

Part of the additional pupil premium funding has been used to help identified students to manage their behaviour and attitudes.

- Attendance is well above average. This confirms that students want to come to school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher leads by example, sets high expectations and a clear direction for the school. She is a visible presence around the school and staff and students respect her.
- The school's aims, including to 'nurture fully the gifts, talents and vocation of each student', are at the heart of its work. All leaders, including members of the governing body, share this drive and its positive impact is integral to the school's good promotion of equal opportunities.
- The high aspirations that exist for students are shown in the breadth of subjects on offer for them to study and the school's policy on examination entry. Good partnership work with local schools, particularly for students in the sixth form, means that students have the opportunity to study a wider range of courses than they could do without this partnership. Some students in Key Stage 4 are entered for examinations before the end of Year 11 but this does not have a negative impact on their progress: almost all of them reach their challenging targets, with some exceeding them.
- Senior leaders have improved teaching. Students are more actively involved in lessons and teachers are now more skilled at using questioning techniques to help students develop their understanding.
- Some of the best teachers have been appointed as 'Lead Practitioners' and use the extra time they are given to share what they do well. School leaders have plans in place to increase these opportunities, including sharing how to be consistent in giving excellent written feedback to students. Inspectors endorse these plans as an important priority.
- Leaders know in detail which aspects of teaching are strong, which need to be developed further and have ensured good opportunities for teacher training and development.
- The headteacher and other senior leaders know in detail the progress all students are making. They use this to make changes to classes when necessary and offer additional support. Good processes are in place to ensure that sixth form students who study in partner schools achieve at least as well as those who study solely at St Edmund's.
- Leaders of subjects and areas are held to account well for the quality of teaching and students' progress. The overall quality of their work is good. Some are more effective than others but this is improving quickly. The work of the curriculum leader of English is particularly strong.
- Leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses. Sustained improvement in key identified areas show that the school has good capacity to improve.
- The management of teachers' performance is thorough and linked closely to students' achievement. The targets set for teachers are more focused than they have been in the past. The headteacher has used a range of evidence to make the correct decisions about teachers' movement up the salary scale, based on the quality of teaching.

- Procedures at the time of the inspection to make sure students are safe were of a high quality.
- The local authority provides appropriate support for this good school. Termly reports on the school's progress are helpful and the most recent annual report for members of the governing body gave good advice. School colleagues are part of a local authority project to raise attainment for the most able students. The school's leader for English has given support to colleagues in other local schools.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Members of the governing body know the school well, with many of them visiting regularly for meetings and to attend celebration Masses and other events. They have a good understanding of how well particular groups of students are doing compared to other students in the school as well as with all students nationally. Training for governors has helped them to do this.
- The curriculum and personnel committees discuss in some detail how well the quality of teaching is improving and take this into account when approving payscale progression for teachers. A recent audit by the local authority judged the approaches and management of the school's finances, including that of governors, to be outstanding. Governors have a good awareness of how pupil premium funding has been used, and what difference this funding has made.

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	104400
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	400712

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary Aided School
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	842
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	135
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Gallagher
Headteacher	Deirdre Finucane
Date of previous school inspection	16 September 2009
Telephone number	01902 558888
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