

Inspection of a good school: St Edmund's Catholic School

299 Westferry Road, Millwall, London E14 3RS

Inspection dates:

18 and 19 January 2023

Outcome

St Edmund's Catholic School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's Christian values permeate through all aspects of school life. Staff welcome pupils warmly each morning. Pupils treat others with kindness and respect. They readily help staff and each other and trust that staff will help them with any worries that they may have. Pupils feel happy and safe because adults have established a very caring ethos.

Staff have high expectations for what pupils should achieve, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils are eager to learn and do their best to work hard. Most pupils achieve well.

Pupils know and understand the school rules. They behave well both in lessons and at play times. In the classroom, pupils take responsibility for their learning by listening respectfully and carrying out their learning tasks with high levels of enthusiasm. Pupils like playing with their friends and being active and healthy outdoors. They say that bullying rarely happens but, if it does, adults are quick to help.

Pupils enjoy the range of activities and visits that the school offers. They particularly enjoy visits to places such as the British Museum. Leaders encourage all pupils to attend the activities offered to them, including cooking, chess, art and sports clubs. Many pupils take advantage of these opportunities.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The interim headteacher joined the school in January 2023. Alongside other leaders, she has quickly established a clear view of the school's strengths and those areas requiring further development.

Leaders have recently reviewed the curriculum. They have identified the essential knowledge and skills that they want pupils to learn. Leaders have also carefully thought out the order in which new knowledge and skills should be taught. As a result, they have

developed an ambitious, interesting and well-ordered curriculum that helps pupils to remember their learning. However, in a few subjects, such as history, teachers are at the early stages of using leaders' recently introduced plans. As a consequence, some teachers have not had sufficient time to develop their subject knowledge to teach the new curriculum effectively.

In some subjects, particularly in English and mathematics, teachers check effectively that pupils have understood and remembered key content. As a result, pupils learn well. In those subjects where recent changes have been made to the curriculums, assessment strategies are less well developed. This makes it harder for teachers to accurately pinpoint how successfully pupils have understood and retained important knowledge and skills over time.

Making sure all pupils learn to read effectively is a high priority for leaders. The reading curriculum is carefully planned, and staff are skilled at teaching phonics. Children start their journey of learning to read as soon as they begin in the Nursery class, where they enjoy joining in with stories, songs and rhymes. Staff ensure that pupils regularly practise using sounds they know when reading. Pupils read to adults in school from books which closely reflect the sounds they are learning. Staff help pupils who fall behind to catch up quickly. As a result, these pupils are developing their reading fluency. Teachers throughout the school help pupils to develop a love of reading.

The mathematics curriculum is carefully planned and sequenced. It clearly identifies what knowledge pupils should learn and when. In Reception, pupils sing songs that help them learn to count. They use this knowledge of number well to create repeating patterns. The early years curriculum is carefully linked to the subject areas that children will move on to learn. This ensures that they are well prepared for Year 1.

Leaders work closely with parents, carers and other professionals to quickly identify any pupils with SEND. They are ambitious for these pupils and ensure that there is no barrier to their success. Pupils receive the support they need to succeed.

Pupils learn about healthy relationships. They are respectful and tolerant of differences. Pupils explain that everybody should be treated equally and fairly. They talk about challenging discrimination or gender stereotypes. Pupils work well in lessons, and learning is not disturbed by poor behaviour. Leaders are also aware that some pupils have mental health needs. Staff, including therapists, enable pupils to explore their feelings. Pupils are provided with opportunities to develop leadership skills through a range of responsibilities, including as school council representatives and playground pals.

Governors and leaders check on staff well-being. Some governors are new to their roles. They are strengthening their expertise in evaluating the improvements that leaders have made to the curriculum. Staff feel valued by leaders. They appreciate how they are supported to manage their workload. Staff feel proud to be a part of this school community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding is a top priority in this school. All staff receive regular safeguarding training. They are alert to the signs of harm or neglect that a pupil may face. Staff are clear about how to report concerns they might have. When concerns arise, they are followed up promptly by leaders. Leaders work closely with external agencies to ensure that pupils get help, if needed.

The curriculum supports pupils to learn how to stay safe. They are taught how to keep themselves safe, both online and in the community.

Leaders ensure that all the required pre-employment checks take place before adults are appointed as staff members.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders' revised curriculums are in the early stages of implementation. In some subjects, the curriculum is not being delivered consistently and effectively by staff. Leaders should ensure that in all subjects the curriculum is implemented well. They should evaluate the impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning.
- In the subjects that have recently undergone some refinements, assessment strategies are less well developed. This means that teachers cannot be certain that pupils have understood and retained important knowledge. Leaders should make sure that assessment methods are used consistently well so that teachers can check that pupils' learning is secure.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2012.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	100951
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	10255479
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Stella Oladinni
Headteacher	Amanda Ruthven
Website	www.st-edmunds-school.org
Date of previous inspection	27 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Edmunds Catholic Primary School is a voluntary aided school in the Diocese of Westminster. Its last section 48 inspection took place in June 2019.
- The school is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school, with a 26-place Nursery class.
- There has been a change of leadership since the previous inspection. The interim headteacher has been in post since January 2023.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.

- During the inspection, the inspector met with the interim headteacher, the assistant headteachers, other leaders and staff at the school. He met with three members of the governing body and spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in reading, history, and mathematics. In these subjects, he spoke to leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work. He looked at other subjects as part of this inspection, including art and design and science.
- The inspector met with groups of pupils to talk about their work, behaviour and their experiences of school.
- Pupils were observed reading to a familiar adult by the inspector. The inspector also looked at pupils' behaviour in lessons and at lunchtime.
- The inspector reviewed a number of policy documents. He spoke with parents to gather their views about the school, and considered the responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey. He also considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff and pupils.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector viewed the school's website and policies, met with the designated safeguarding leader, spoke with pupils, staff and governors, and checked relevant documentation and safeguarding records.

Inspection team

Chris Birtles, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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