



St Edmund's Catholic School

Inspection Report - Amended

Unique Reference Number 104400
Local Authority Wolverhampton
Inspection number 286931
Inspection dates 20–21 September 2006
Reporting inspector Rob Hubbleday HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Compton Park
School category	Voluntary aided		Compton Road West
Age range of pupils	11–19		Wolverhampton WV3 9DU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01902 558888
Number on roll (school)	806	Fax number	01902 558889
Number on roll (6th form)	144		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Don Courten
		Headteacher	D Finucane
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2006		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–19	20–21 September 2006	286931

Amended Report Addendum

Report updated to resolve formatting inconsistency

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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 shares an attractive campus in the green belt of Wolverhampton with two other secondary schools with whom there are consortium arrangements for teaching students in the sixth form. It draws its pupils from across the city and is significantly oversubscribed. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage but there are 30 of Indian descent and smaller numbers from a range of other minority ethnic backgrounds. A lower proportion of pupils than average are entitled to free school meals. The proportion with special educational needs is below average and overall attainment at the start of Year 7 is slightly above average. The school gained specialist status as a mathematics and computing college in September 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school which can point to several significant developments to demonstrate it has the capacity to continue improving. First and foremost, its good results at Key Stage 4 indicate that measures it began taking a few years ago to modify the curriculum and to make better use of assessment data were the right ones. Pupils leaving Year 11 in 2006 have made good progress across the board and have the core skills to equip them for future study and work. Second, it has successfully tackled the key issues from its last inspection and, in particular, made huge strides in improving provision and achievement in information and communication technology (ICT). Specialist status has been of enormous benefit in raising the school's expectations of itself. Tangible evidence of this is provided by the imminent unveiling of a new ICT suite, along with other important improvements to the accommodation.

The school is in an advantageous position and ought to be a good school. It is oversubscribed, is on a beautiful site, has a stable population of pupils with generally above average levels of prior attainment, and has many strong subject departments. However, in nearly every aspect of its work, as well as notable strengths there are relative weaknesses or elements of 'ordinariness'. The pupils' achievement and standards at Key Stage 3, particularly in science, and in the sixth form come nowhere near matching the recent improvements at Key Stage 4. The pupils' personal development is strong in terms of their attendance, awareness of how to live a healthy lifestyle and general level of preparedness to work but a significant minority lack self-discipline and regularly cause problems. There is a substantial amount of good and better teaching but also much that is mundane and fails to excite the pupils' interest.

The local authority's good support through its attached adviser has been instrumental in focusing the school's thinking. The school's leadership and management have responded positively and ensured that the school has moved forward, but the pace and impact of developments have been inconsistent because lines of responsibility have sometime been unclear. The school's systems for managing data have not always been up to the task so planning for school improvement and monitoring progress have been hindered. The school's self-evaluation acknowledges these weaknesses but also points out that recruitment issues, especially in science most recently, have contributed to a lack of progress in some areas.

Nevertheless, there is much the school can celebrate. Staff work hard and successfully to ensure that St Edmund's is a pleasant and generally effective place for pupils to study. Relationships between staff and with pupils are good and all of the sixth formers who were interviewed during the inspection looked back on their time at the school with pleasure.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The number of students choosing to join the sixth form, either directly from St Edmund's or increasingly from other schools, has increased significantly. One of the

attractions is that the joint arrangements with S. Peter's C of E School and Wolverhampton Girls' High School enable students to study a wide range of AS and A-level courses. Students speak very positively of their experiences and feel well supported. Standards have improved slowly and are generally average. Taking the students' entry grades into account, their achievements are broadly satisfactory but have tended to be slightly better at AS level than A level. The school is aware that some students began academic courses with only the minimum entry grades because they were keen to remain at St Edmund's. Only business studies is currently offered at the lower Level 2 and the school's plans to introduce more courses of a similar standard have not materialised. The management of the sixth form is satisfactory but is hindered by the lack of time and administrative support available for the head of sixth form. In addition, essential processes, such as the quality assurance of provision and monitoring the students' performance, are made more complex by differences in the way each school operates.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement, especially in science at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, by monitoring the pupils' performance more effectively and intervening earlier when pupils are not on track to meet their targets.
- Sharpen the accountability of all leaders and managers by setting clearer targets by which to measure success against the school's priorities for school improvement.
- Improve the quality of teaching by sharing more effectively the good practice which engages pupils in more participative styles of learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. The pupils make satisfactory progress in most subjects through much of the school and standards are broadly average at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. Achievement at Key Stage 4 has improved in recent years and the pupils now make good progress from the age of 14 so that standards at age 16 are above average.

At the end of Key Stage 3, the results of national tests in English and mathematics have remained average since the exceptionally high results of 2001. Although a higher proportion of pupils than nationally has consistently reached the expected Level 5, the proportions reaching the higher levels have remained firmly in line with national figures. Most pupils have made satisfactory progress and low attaining boys have done particularly well. Standards in literacy and numeracy have generally been at least in line with those in similar schools. Science, however, has not matched this performance in 2005 or 2006 and many pupils have made inadequate progress in this subject.

At Key Stage 4, the 2006 results have continued the clear upward trend evident since 2003 and standards are above average. The proportion of pupils gaining at least five A*-C grades has risen from 63% in 2005 to 71%. Nearly all of these pupils have also

achieved a good grade in English and mathematics. All groups of pupils have made at least satisfactory, and often good, progress, including in science, and the proportion achieving five A*-G grades has risen further – to 98%. The school has exceeded challenging targets for the rate of progress made by its pupils and has done as well as the top quarter of schools across the country. These results represent good achievement from the pupils' entry grades in Year 7. Boys have again done particularly well. This type of performance is not repeated in the sixth form, where achievement is satisfactory. The 2006 results for Year 12 and Year 13 show only a small increase in the average points score and remain broadly average. The school's analysis indicates that only a third of the Year 13 students achieved or exceeded their targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. Attendance is above average.

Although the number of temporary exclusions in the last 12 months is too high, pupils and staff report that behaviour has improved since last year. The introduction of a time-out room has been effective, as has the clearer stating of the code of behaviour. During the inspection, behaviour in most lessons was good and attitudes to learning were at least satisfactory, even if not markedly positive. When the lack of challenge in some lessons led to restlessness and a loss of concentration, the pupils' conduct usually remained within acceptable bounds. Pupils report that they enjoy practical lessons, such as technology and art, but they wish other lessons could be 'more fun'. Around the school, behaviour was generally sensible but pupils sometimes lacked self-discipline when unsupervised and became too boisterous. The school's analysis of misbehaviour indicates that much of it arises at the end of lunchtime.

Pupils are developing healthy lifestyles and have a good understanding of the importance of taking regular exercise, drinking plenty of water and eating healthy foods. At lunchtime, most pupils choose healthy options in the dining room and they have influenced the menus offered. Large numbers take part in the very good range of sporting activities offered by the school. Pupils make a sound contribution to the school and local community. A good number have trained as peer mentors and junior sport leaders. They enthusiastically support local, national and international charities, and almost all took part in the sponsored charity walk. However, the school council's impact remains relatively limited, which is a source of great frustration to its members.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of teaching and learning across the school is satisfactory. There is a significant proportion which is good but its impact on achievement is muted by much that is no better than satisfactory. The inspection confirmed the school's view that there is some outstanding teaching and only a very small amount which is inadequate.

Lessons are well planned and organised so that pupils know what they have to do. Most lessons start snappily and follow a clear sequence of activities which include periods listening to the teacher and times when written or practical work is required. The teachers generally manage behaviour effectively and nearly all the lessons seen were calm and purposeful. The constructive marking of written work is a particular strength across the school. The best teaching, for example, in physical education, is lively and generates enthusiasm and commitment from all of the pupils. Too much of the teaching, however, is routine and does not foster the pupils' active engagement. Too little discussion takes place and too much time is spent listening to teachers and working through tasks without a sense of enquiry.

There were few examples of lessons which included modified work for the most and least able, even when pupils who were gifted and talented or had learning difficulties were identified on planning sheets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and enables pupils to make increasingly good progress, particularly at Key Stage 4 where the school has thought carefully about the balance of subjects studied and the way in which pupils are grouped. Pupils have access to a wide range of subjects, including work-related activities and, for some, an alternative curriculum, which matches their aspirations and capabilities well. The school has effectively managed its development as a specialist college, and as a result, provision in mathematics and ICT is strong and improving. Allied with generally good levels of literacy, the pupils are well prepared for further study and employment. Sporting and musical activities are very popular, both in and out of lessons, and have earned the school a good reputation within the local community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory and members of staff take a keen interest in the pupils' personal well-being. Support for the most vulnerable pupils is very good. Pupils speak highly of being mentored to help them modify their behaviour to avoid repeated exclusions. The school provides a safe environment for pupils and procedures for securing health and safety are satisfactory, including arrangements for child protection. A programme of personal education is provided but some pupils speak negatively of the value of these lessons.

The school has a good range of information about academic progress and personal development but much of it is not easily accessible to teachers. However, the school has facilitated links between pastoral care and academic monitoring by enhancing the role of heads of year. Academic mentoring and support are well established at Key Stage 4 but not at Key Stage 3. Pupils expressed a mixed response to target setting days, with some finding them more valuable than others. Some younger pupils reported that targets 'are not always followed through'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory and have ensured that all the key issues from the last inspection have been tackled successfully. In 2003, a review of the leadership team's effectiveness sparked several improvements. Greater emphasis was given to the line management of subjects and the importance of reversing a decline in standards at Key Stage 4. The school began to adopt a more systematic approach to checking on the quality of its work. At the same time, the appointment of a bursar with expertise in project management was an imaginative and effective strategy to strengthen the school's capacity to improve. She has played a major role in coordinating bids to gain specialist status and for improvements to the accommodation.

The school has an accurate picture of the areas where it needs to focus its efforts and, to this extent, its self-evaluation is effective. However, the process of drawing the information together and defining what needs to be done has been slow. Departmental evaluations carried out last year by heads of department are valuable sources of intelligence but reveal a considerable level of inconsistency. The senior leadership team has not given a sufficiently strong lead on the way that assessment information and performance need to be evaluated. Its systems for storing and using data are cumbersome and inefficient. Consequently, objectives within the school improvement plan sometimes lack the precision needed to promote effective monitoring.

The governing body is supportive and conscientious. Its committees are well organised and matters are dealt with efficiently. Nevertheless, the chair recognises that the governing body's impact in achieving improvement in some areas has been slow.

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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>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

You will recall that your school was inspected recently. Many of you would have seen inspectors in your lessons or around the school. We also spoke to particular groups of pupils and students drawn from across the age ranges. I would like to thank you for helping us understand your views of St Edmund's. Even if you did not speak to an inspector, your responses to a questionnaire which you completed last year – 'The voice of the learner' – were influential in our thinking.

We have judged that the school is satisfactory and improving. To become a truly good school, we have said there are three main areas where it should focus.

1. Many of you told us that you liked the school and were happy attending because it was a friendly place but that too many of your lessons did not excite you. We saw for ourselves that this was sometimes true but also saw quite a high number of lessons where the teaching was good or, occasionally, outstanding. We have recommended that the school find ways of sharing the good practice so that more of your experiences in lessons are stimulating.

2. Pupils who left Year 11 in the summer have done very well in their GCSEs and have made good progress during Key Stage 4. Standards of literacy, numeracy and ICT are above average. The school is increasingly successful in giving you the best chance to do well in the future. However, we were disappointed that the results at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form show that pupils and students have made only satisfactory rather than good progress. We have discussed the possible reasons for this with the staff and have suggested that they check on your progress against your targets more rigorously. This will enable them to take action sooner when someone is falling behind and is an approach which has worked well at Key Stage 4. We also agree with the school that it would be valuable if there were more Level 2 courses available for those of you who were not ready to take AS and A level courses.

3. If you have been at the school for several years, you will know that there have been some important developments, such as the huge increase in computers, the gaining of specialist status and the soon-to-be-open improvements in accommodation. The increase in the numbers of students joining the sixth form is a good indicator of your school's growing reputation. The senior staff have talked with us about areas where they would like to have made more progress and we have given our view as to why this has not happened. One of the difficulties is that the school has a lot of assessment data about your progress but it is not in an easily accessible format for the teachers to use. We have asked the school to improve this so that senior teachers can analyse better what is working effectively and what needs more attention.

Our full report, which I hope some of you will read, contains information about other strengths and weaknesses. One point which may interest you particularly concerns the school council. We were surprised to learn how frustrated some of the representatives were about the role of the council. We think, like those representatives, that, where it is possible and sensible, the school should act more vigorously on your suggestions.

On behalf of the inspection team, may I wish you every success in the future.