

St Edmund Champion Catholic School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103537
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	331578
Inspection dates	7–8 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Gwendoline Coates HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	960
Sixth form	131
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Thomas Davenport
Headteacher	Philomena Steele
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2005
School address	Sutton Road Erdington Birmingham B23 5XA
Telephone number	01214 647700
Fax number	01214 647042

Age group	11–18
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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 Campion is an average size school. A greater than average proportion of students are eligible for free school meals. There are above average proportions of students from minority ethnic backgrounds but the proportion of students for whom English is an additional language is below average. The school has specialist language college status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

St Edmund Campion is a satisfactory school with many good features. The strong leadership of the headteacher has ensured that the school has made the improvements identified as necessary in the previous inspection. Teaching and learning are now good; lessons are well planned, engage students' interests and meet their learning needs. Marking is accurate and helpful in guiding students about what aspects of their work need to improve further and how such improvement can be achieved. The impact of this good teaching and learning, and the good care, guidance and support now in place, can be seen in the improving rates of progress that students are making and their rising standards of attainment. Achievement and standards overall are now satisfactory. Personal development and well-being are good and, as a result of effective policies and their consistent application, students behave well around the school and in lessons.

Capacity to improve further is strengthened by the determined leadership of the headteacher, the clear steer that has been given by the new chair of governors, the recent additions to the senior leadership team, and the careful nurturing of leadership potential at middle management level. However, not all areas of leadership in the school are as good as the best.

Good self-evaluation provides an accurate diagnosis of the school's strengths and weaknesses and results in effective improvement planning. As a result, the school is fully aware of the causes of its current budget deficit. Its plans to resolve this, although appropriate to guarantee the current quality of education, are not sufficiently urgent to ensure that the quality of education continues to improve at the very good rate demonstrated in the last year.

The school works very well in partnership with others in order to meet the needs of all of its students. Good links exist with outside agencies to support the school's work and to promote community cohesion. Its specialist language college status is having a significant impact on the school, promoting improvement in teaching and learning and an increasing focus on cultural, international and language aspects in lessons. The school's work with feeder primary schools and with other secondary schools is good and it is providing good cultural and language opportunities for the local community.

Despite strong links with other agencies and schools, communication with parents is only satisfactory. A significant minority of parental questionnaire responses were not fully supportive of the school. The issues parents raised were explored thoroughly during the inspection. It was judged that communication and dialogue between parents and carers and the school need to be improved so that parents and carers are made more aware of the good progress that is being made in improving the quality of education their children are receiving and the impact this is having on their achievement and personal development, including their behaviour.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Students in the sixth form make satisfactory progress and achieve in line with expectations. The standards they attain are broadly average to below average, with attainment at the end of Year 13 being better than attainment at the end of Year 12. However, more robust induction procedures, improvements in teaching and learning, the setting of challenging targets, and the

more supportive use of tracking data are bringing about improvements in outcomes for students. This is particularly evident in the rising retention rates. The curriculum, which includes a limited range of one-year Level 2 vocational courses and a large range of options at GCE AS and A level, is satisfactory and has produced satisfactory outcomes for the students. However, it is costly because many courses have only small numbers of students. Plans are well advanced for a new sixth form curriculum that aims to widen choice and attract more students. Students benefit from over 40 extra-curricular activities, including mentoring younger pupils, paired reading, and visits to Rome and the National Film Theatre. The enrichment curriculum, which includes careers education, citizenship and religious education (RE), helps to widen students' academic, social and moral development, but carries no accreditation. The international students who spend Year 12 at the school via the Education First Foundation add richness to the sixth form experience.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop a more confident dialogue with parents and carers.
- Ensure that more urgent planning to reduce the budget deficit is introduced in order to maintain the very good pace of improvement in the quality of education that has been evident in the last year.
- Review the roles and responsibilities in the leadership team in order to further improve the school's efficiency and effectiveness.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is broadly average. Achievement overall is satisfactory, although school data suggest pupils' progress has improved significantly in the last year. Standards at the end of Year 11 are broadly average but have been improving gradually over the last three years. In 2008, 43% of students gained five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, an increase of 10% on the 2006 figure, and school data indicate that the school is on course to improve on this further in 2009. School data indicate that the progress students are making is showing significant improvement. This was evident in the lessons observed during the inspection and in the data on early entry to GCSE examinations. There are no significant variations between different groups of learners. All students are set challenging targets and school data suggest they are increasingly meeting such targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good as a result of good provision through the personal, social and moral education (PSME) programme and through assemblies. Most students take living a healthy lifestyle seriously and are able to talk knowledgeably about exercise and healthy eating and how to keep themselves safe. This is supported through PSME lessons and specific focus groups. Students report that they feel safe in school, although they would like 'no ball' areas in the playground. They report that there are few bullying incidents but that when they do occur, they are dealt with promptly. Students are happy in school and report that they enjoy their learning. As a result of this and successful strategies to reduce

absences, attendance is improving, although the school recognises there is further work to do with persistent absentees.

Students report that behaviour is much improved and inspectors judged that behaviour and pupils' attitudes towards each other and to adults are generally good. Students know and respect the sanctions and rewards used to promote good behaviour. They feel their views are listened to and acted upon. The school council is proud of the fact that it played a strategic part in the development of the new behaviour policy and the appointments of the very effective behaviour managers.

The school is rightly proud of its work in the wider community, where it raises money for a number of local and national charities. Improving literacy and numeracy skills, and the fact that all students participate in work experience, together with planned careers and enterprise opportunities, ensure all are well prepared for life beyond school. Students recognise that the school has worked hard to make changes for their benefit. In the words of one student, 'This school has changed substantially in the last few years. The teachers really want us to succeed. It's great!'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good, with examples of outstanding practice. The school has focused on engaging and challenging students, enabling them to develop their independent learning skills. As a result, students are currently making good progress. Teachers share good relationships with students and are committed to ensuring all achieve their targets. In the best lessons teachers plan in detail, make good use of available assessment data, have high expectations and set challenging tasks suitable for all ability groups. There are many opportunities to evaluate what students know, understand and can do. Most students enjoy their lessons and the occasions to work independently. In less successful lessons the teacher talks too much and overlooks the chance to question students directly and to plan strategies for monitoring their levels of understanding. To strengthen learning, good use is made of homework. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by teaching assistants and progress as well as their peers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum overall is satisfactory, although it is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. In Years 7 to 9 the curriculum meets statutory requirements and includes global citizenship and information and communication technology (ICT) for all students. A skills-based programme is partially in place in Year 7. This is part of a whole-school curriculum review that is intended to provide a more student-centred focus. All Year 10 students currently access a range of accredited academic courses, together with a limited number of vocational education and alternative curriculum pathways. However, there are plans to provide greater choice for existing Year 9 students, fostering a personalised 14 to 19 curriculum that is more appropriate to students' needs and aspirations. The school's specialist status in languages has had a positive impact on the curriculum, 'bringing it to life' and, in particular, increasing the number of international links. The school provides a wide range of sporting and extra-curricular activities, including trips and visits, days of reflection and regular performing arts events.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

There are effective procedures in place to safeguard learners; recruitment strategies are secure, risk assessments are thorough and all staff are trained in child protection procedures. Links with external agencies are very constructive and multi-agency meetings bring about positive results for students. The school has worked hard with parents to improve attendance and holidays during term time are no longer authorised. The new key stage coordinators and behaviour managers provide good support for both teachers and students. Students themselves recognise the value of the isolation centre and its role in improving behaviour.

Good academic tracking systems are in place to assess how well students are progressing and the academic guidance and targets that result from these are appropriately sharp and challenging. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have made progress in line with their peers as a result of the good monitoring procedures that enable appropriate and timely intervention and support to be put in place. Additionally there is a very proactive and effective programme of support in place for those students with English as an additional language. Students in Year 11 are very appreciative of the extra booster lessons and coaching they have been given, which are improving their grades. Independent careers advice and guidance is well structured and provided for all year groups. Work experience is valued highly by the students in Year 10, and all Year 11 students have 'mock' interviews with local employers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher sets very clear direction and is driving the school's improvement. There are some inconsistencies in the quality of leadership but recent additions to the senior leadership team are having a significant impact on improving the quality of education, particularly in relation to teaching and learning. Middle leaders are now accountable for performance in their departments and are being empowered to contribute effectively to raising the achievement of their students. Monitoring and evaluation processes are rigorous. The regular and highly effective monitoring of teaching and learning feeds into weekly professional development sessions that are having a marked impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Challenging targets at whole-school and at student level are set and these are having a very positive impact on raising standards and eliminating low achievement among groups. Equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination is eliminated. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good and its Catholic ethos and language college specialism both contribute significantly to this. Value for money is satisfactory. The school is dealing appropriately with its large budget deficit and the headteacher and chair of governors recognise that there are hard and urgent decisions to be made in respect of this.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	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/or disabilities make progress	3	

¹Grade 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.

²IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	IE ²
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
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 learners' needs?	2	IE ²
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?	2	IE ²

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

11 May 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of St Edmund Campion Catholic School, Birmingham B23 5XA

We enjoyed our visit to your school and would like to thank you for the courtesy and friendliness you showed us. We judged that the school no longer requires significant improvement and is now a satisfactory school with many good features. The good features include:

- well-planned lessons and good teaching that engages you and enables you to meet your targets
- effective guidance and support systems that track your progress, behaviour and attendance and ensure that all of you are well cared for
- your own good personal development and your positive attitudes to learning.

As a result of these good features, the progress you are making in your studies is improving significantly and the rising standards you have attained over the last three years look set to rise again in 2009.

We have asked the school to focus on a number of areas that will improve the quality of your education even more. These include:

- greater communication with your parents
- taking more urgent action to reduce the school's budget deficit
- reviewing the roles and responsibilities of the leadership team.

You can help the school in its mission to improve the quality of your education and the outcomes you achieve even further by attending regularly, behaving well at all times and working as hard as you can.

Best wishes

Gwen Coates

Her Majesty's Inspector