

# St Edmund's Catholic School

## Inspection report

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Unique Reference Number	104400
Local Authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	336299
Inspection dates	16-17 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Michelle Parker HMI

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

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Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
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	772
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	113
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Margaret Gallagher
Headteacher	Ms Deirdre Finucane
Date of previous school inspection	20-21 September 2006
School address	Compton Park Compton Park West Wolverhampton WV3 9DU
Telephone number	01902 558888
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors. Inspectors visited 34 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work and looked at: the school's improvement plan, safeguarding policies and documentation, the tracking of students' progress, individual education plans (IEPs) of a number of students with learning difficulties and / or disabilities, minutes of governors' meetings, 47 parental questionnaires and just over 100 student questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- Teachers' expectations of average and lower attaining students to ensure that they effectively promote students' progress.
- Subject leadership and monitoring in English and mathematics to ensure that they can continue to improve GCSE results.
- The curriculum, monitoring and support provided to boys to ensure they make at least satisfactory progress.
- The staying on rate of students in the sixth form from Year 12 to Year 13 and the extent to which students attain well in their AS-level courses in Year 12, find teaching and learning stimulating and engaging, and are provided with high quality support and guidance.

## Information about the school

St Edmund's shares an attractive campus in the green belt of Wolverhampton with two other secondary schools with which there are consortium arrangements for teaching students in the sixth form. It draws its students from across the city and is significantly oversubscribed. The great majority of students are of White British heritage although approximately a quarter of students come from different minority ethnic groups. Most of these students are from Indian backgrounds and a number are believed to speak a language other than English in the home. A lower proportion of students than average is entitled to free school meals. The proportion with special educational needs is below average. The school gained specialist status as a mathematics and computing college in September 2005.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate  
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

## Main findings

St Edmund's is a well led and rapidly improving school. It provides an extremely caring and supportive environment, where students feel safe and where their behaviour is good. There is a strong trend of improving provision in the sixth form which has yet to impact on outcomes. Students in the main school and sixth form made at least satisfactory progress in all lessons that were observed by inspectors. Improvements in teachers' use of tracking data ensure that students who are at risk of underachieving are quickly identified and appropriate interventions put in place to support them. As a result, boys' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 improved in 2009 and, although girls still outperform boys, the gap has narrowed considerably. Teaching and support ensures that students with learning difficulties and / or disabilities make at least satisfactory progress. Results in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) at the end of Key Stage 4 have improved substantially so that although they were slightly below national averages, students are now better placed for their next stage of education. The introduction into Key Stage 4, of adult literacy and numeracy (ALaN) tests, the wide range of courses in information technology and well planned opportunities for work experience enable students to be well prepared for life beyond school. Thus the specialism drives students' learning in the main school. In all lessons observed teachers took account of the broad needs of all students, but did not always ensure that individual students had work tightly matched to their abilities. Opportunities were missed to question students more deeply on their learning and to adapt lessons to take account the needs of individual students who would benefit from greater challenge.

The school has made good progress in tackling the key areas for development identified in the previous inspection. For example the tracking of students' performance is now embedded into senior staff and middle leaders' monitoring. The analysis of data gives an accurate picture of the school's performance and is used well by the senior team to inform their whole school planning. However, teachers and other staff do not make sufficient use of monitoring information to enable them to plan activities matched to students' needs so that all groups make good progress. Further evidence for the school's improved capacity for sustained improvement is in the strengthened senior leadership team and recent appointments to middle management. Teaching has also improved. There is more good teaching and, in satisfactory lessons, good features occur more frequently. Students know their targets and in most cases are clear about what they have to do to improve. Teachers' confidence in their teaching has greatly improved. Behaviour in lessons is

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well managed, relationships are strong and students said how much they value the work and support of staff. The effective work of the 'Success Centre' has ensured that numbers of exclusions and of lessons interrupted by inappropriate behaviour have been significantly reduced. Students' learning has improved because they are well prepared and supported in their reintegration into lessons. The curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 is now good and offers a wide range of opportunities for accreditation and routes into further learning.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good teaching and, in doing so, raise standards by:
  - ensuring that teachers match work more closely to individual students' needs, take better account of students' previous learning and make more effective use of the full range of performance data that is available to them
  - promoting the use of effective questioning, so that students explain their thinking and are challenged to achieve their potential.
- Ensure teachers' and other staff's planning makes effective use of monitoring information in order that activities promote good progress for all groups of learners.
- Ensure that plans for broadening provision in the sixth form impact effectively to improve students' attainment and promote progression into further or higher education or employment.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

### Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Progress in all lessons observed for all groups of students, including those with learning disabilities and/or difficulties, and those believed to speak a language other than English in the home was at least satisfactory. In most lessons, students made good use of time, were interested and well motivated, and were given sufficient opportunities for independent study. A good example occurred in a Year 8 design and technology lesson. Students were engrossed in discussion evaluating the previous Year 8's pop up cards. Their perseverance and determination to complete the work was impressive.

Attainment in English, mathematics, science and ICT has improved and in 2009, exceeded the school's challenging targets. Students throughout the school attain standards that are close to national expectations for their age. Inspection evidence relating to the progress of boys across both key stages and to those students of average and lower attainment indicates that their progress is satisfactory. The school

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has in place good strategies to guide students who are at risk of underachieving. While it is too early to judge their impact, the quality of planning represents an improvement since the last inspection. In most subjects, there is support for reading and writing in lessons and this leads to satisfactory skills in oracy, literacy, numeracy and ICT, because students are better able to comprehend instructions and to express their understanding.

Other key features of students outcomes:

- Students feel safe and are confident that any bullying is dealt with promptly.
- Students understand the importance of good food, a healthy diet and regular exercise to being physically healthy. Students are well informed about the dangers of drug misuse, the importance of assessing risk and making sensible life choices. The majority choose healthy options from the lunch menu and participate in an impressive range of sporting activities offered by the school, including girls' football.
- Students make a good contribution both to the life of the school through a wide range of responsibilities, such as mentoring and organising the school's recycling, and to the wider community.
- Attendance has improved and is now outstanding. This, together with the wide range of qualifications taken at Key Stage 4, ensures that students are well prepared for their future economic well being.
- Students have a good understanding of spiritual, morale and cultural issues because of the school's desire to equip everyone for life in a multicultural city. They respect other's view points and value the wide range of students' backgrounds. So that positive images of other cultures are a feature in lessons.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

## How effective is the provision?

Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory although teachers' subject knowledge is good. Where learning is best, teachers provide plenty of opportunities for paired and group discussion. In the good lessons seen questioning appropriately challenged students' thinking and encouraged them to explain their ideas. An example of how this was used to promote learning occurred in a Year 10 English lesson in which very clear learning objectives deepened students' understanding of the poem they were reading. Consequently, they were able to work independently in pairs and groups and could adapt the task for their own purposes.

Lesson observations focused on how effectively teaching engaged and challenged boys, and middle and lower attaining students. In mathematics at Key Stage 4, the school has increased the number of groups from five to six and so provision better caters to teaching students with varying needs. However, in some mathematics lessons learning is too passive, with too much teacher talk and whole class teaching, often with too slow a start to the lesson leading to some students losing concentration.

The improved curriculum enables some students to begin their GCSE courses in Year 9. This has increased levels of motivation. All Year 9 students gain a language qualification. The needs of students, particularly boys, in Key Stage 4 are met well through an appropriately broad range of vocational provision. A wide range of well established partnerships are used well to enhance students' learning. The use of mentoring to support potential underachievers works well. The school's match of provision to needs has improved since the last inspection.

### *These are the grades for the quality of provision*

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

## How effective are leadership and management?

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The effectiveness of leadership was a focus for the inspection. Leaders at all levels are now thinking more strategically about their area of school improvement and monitoring is closely linked to the school's action planning. One consequence is that middle managers are more purposefully improving the quality of teaching, care and guidance. Monitoring appropriately includes observations of lessons and checking the quality of students' work. Judgements are moderated and are discussed with staff but monitoring does not always ensure that this feedback is used to improve planning. Good practice is now shared across departments and systematically built upon. This is evident in the ways teachers help students to assess their own learning. New appointments have reinvigorated the school's specialist subjects of mathematics and computing and as a consequence teaching in these subjects has improved.

Another focus for the inspection was the monitoring of boys' progress in Key Stages 3 and 4. The school's monitoring systems accurately track the progress of all groups of learners. The senior team are providing teachers with data on students' progress and teachers are beginning to use this information to better match teaching to all students' needs; the progress of middle and lower attaining boys in particular has improved as a result.

The school's effective work to promote equalities is exemplified in the way it has determinedly worked to reduce the gap between boys' and girls' attainment. Observations in lessons and evaluation of work showed that teachers were increasingly successful in engaging boys in their learning.

Discussions with governors indicated that they have well organised approaches to monitoring the school's performance and appropriately challenging the senior team. Link governors visit departments, take an interest in curriculum developments and so understand the school at first hand. Consequently, governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and they use a range of information effectively to monitor policies and plans and to hold the school to account for what it achieves.

The business director ensures the school achieves best value from funding, consequently improvements have been made to school buildings. She also effectively supports the implementation and monitoring of the school's safeguarding procedures.

The school takes an active role in promoting community cohesion within the city and this can be seen in the links made with other faith groups and its support and work in local primary schools. Planning is in place to develop this further and the school has established some links abroad, but it is too early to judge their impact.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and	2
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driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

## Sixth form

Although standards in subjects in the sixth form do not always meet national expectations, the school has introduced an appropriate range of strategies to address areas of underachievement. Tracking systems are robust and show an improving trend. Tracking enables individuals' progress to be readily monitored with the result that interventions are timely and tightly focused. Consequently, students state that they feel well supported. Sufficient opportunities for enrichment through extra curricular activities are provided and students are encouraged to use their initiative. All sixth form students are encouraged to take an active role in the school and its wider community. The head boy and girl are associate members of the governing body and, through them, all students have a real voice in their education.

A focus for the inspection was the retention and progression of students from AS-level courses in Year 12 to A2 courses in Year 13. The school has put in place a series of initiatives, including improved monitoring across the consortium, to improve the numbers of students who stay on for A2 courses. In addition, the sixth form mentor is effectively supporting individual students who experience particular difficulties. The current curriculum caters well for students studying for academic qualifications and students do well in these and in the vocational courses on offer. However, the school has correctly identified that it does not provide sufficient choice of vocational courses. The majority of sixth form teaching observed provided stimulating and challenging learning activities. Students have plenty of opportunities to work independently and are well motivated. Students stated that they enjoy their work and like the different teaching styles.

The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The head of the sixth form has a clear vision for improvement, which she shares effectively with other staff thus for example appropriate planning is in place to develop the curriculum.

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*These are the grades for the sixth form*

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	3
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

## Views of parents and carers

Almost all the completed parental questionnaires were positive. Parents were pleased with the homework provided and believed their children were well supported by the school to achieve well. One parent commented on the effort put into preparing the child for transition from primary school to secondary school. Fewer than 15% of questionnaires raised any concerns and most of these were about undesirable behaviour, or wanting more contact from the school.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Edmunds Catholic High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 47 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 772 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	34%	29	62%	0	0%	0	0%
The teaching is good at this school	18	38%	27	57%	0	0%	0	0%
The school helps me to support my child's learning	13	28%	29	62%	4	9%	0	0%
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	9	19%	34	72%	3	6%	0	0%
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	15	32%	28	60%	1	2%	0	0%
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	34%	28	60%	0	0%	0	0%
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	40%	19	40%	7	15%	0	0%
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	15%	33	70%	4	9%	0	0%
The school is led and managed effectively	16	34%	27	57%	2	4%	0	0%
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	44%	23	51%	0	0%	0	0%

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.



18 September 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of St Edmund's Catholic School, Wolverhampton WV3 9DU

Thank you for the courteous and warm welcome you gave to the inspection team. We believe you go to a well led and rapidly improving school. You are now gaining better grades at the end of Key Stage 4. The school has worked hard to reduce the gap between boys' and girls' performance and to improve your success in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology.

We were very impressed by your excellent attendance and punctuality. Many of you spoke to us and helped us in the inspection by explaining what you did and how the school helps you. We were impressed with your behaviour and your ability to work independently. All the staff work hard to ensure you are safe and well supported.

We were pleased to see that teaching is improving and teachers are making better use of assessment information to help you make progress faster. We have asked them to improve teaching further by asking you more questions that encourage you to explain your thinking and to ensure planning provides work better matched to your individual needs. The school collects a huge amount of information on your progress and we have asked them to use it more efficiently to support your learning. The curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 has broadened and we have asked the school to do the same in the sixth form curriculum so that you have a greater choice of courses.

We wish you continued success.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Parker  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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