



# St Edmund's College and Prep School

URN: 117633

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster

09–10 May 2024

## Summary of key findings

### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

#### Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission

#### Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

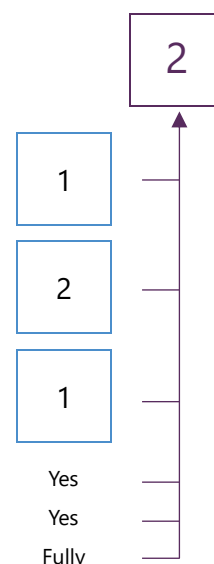
#### Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection



## What the school does well

- The school's outstanding commitment to the values of St Edmund helps all pupils to develop a strong awareness of the importance of Catholic spirituality.
- Pupils are given excellent opportunities for outreach – putting their faith into action by helping others.
- There is a joyful, inclusive and welcoming culture which is celebrated by both staff and pupils.
- Leaders have introduced strategies for higher performance learning in religious education which equip pupils to go deeper in their knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils and staff, regardless of their faith background are deeply committed to the prayer and liturgical life of the school which is at the heart of all that happens at St Edmund's.

## What the school needs to improve

- Share good practice within the religious education department to ensure the best outcomes for all pupils.
- Develop pupils' understanding of how well they are doing in religious education and what they need to do to improve further.
- Continue to develop leadership opportunities for pupils to further enhance the school's prayer life and Catholic mission.

## Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

### Catholic life and mission key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

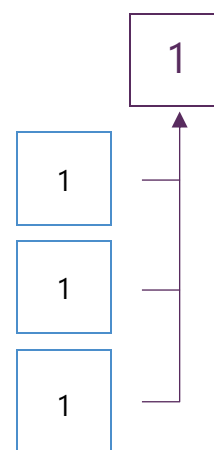
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school



Pupils understand and truly live the Catholic mission of St Edmund's. There is a sense of joy around the school with one pupil commenting, 'it is a very happy place'. Pupils understand the demands of Catholic social teaching and enthusiastically respond to the need to care for others. This includes raising money for Cafod, organising an annual sleep out for the Passage, fundraising for Bakhita House, contributing to a local food bank and organising a very popular party for older local residents at Christmas. Pupils in the excellent Chaplaincy Team often take a leading role in selecting which charities to support. Pupils can confidently articulate the theology behind their actions. There is a strong support for the importance of freedom of worship and this is supported by the outstanding Red Wednesday initiative. This is an inclusive school which demonstrates great respect for those of other faiths, religions and none. Pupils of other faiths told Inspectors how they appreciate the spiritual support that is offered. One parent commented that, 'My child is encouraged to be themselves while respecting others.' Many pupils are also involved in the Faith in Action programme which is an excellent way for them to demonstrate in their daily actions the faith they profess. Students in the sixth form regularly support pupils in lower year groups and developing such leadership opportunities would further enhance the excellent work which is happening in this area. Pupils have many opportunities to make their voice known including the School Council, Boarders Council and Diversity Council.

The mission statement is lived by the whole school community and based on the Edmundian Virtues which are displayed throughout the school and referenced frequently. Staff are committed to the school's mission and are excellent role models for the pupils. There is a spirit of generous hospitality in the school and a lived sense of community where no-one is excluded. The excellent culture of welcome leads to a confident and inclusive atmosphere which those pupils from other faiths strongly appreciate. Pastoral care is excellent, consistently bearing witness to the school's Catholic life and

mission and there is an explicit commitment to the most vulnerable. The school environment provides an outstanding witness to the school's Catholic identity, from noticeboards and displays to the beautiful Pugin Chapel. The chaplaincy is a vital and vibrant hub with an outward-facing and inclusive dynamic. There is a comprehensive programme of events and activities which are well used by pupils, placing Christ in the centre of the school. One parent commented, 'The chaplaincy is an amazing place and offers a fantastic service to the whole community'. The relationships, sex and health education provision is well planned and resourced and meets all statutory and diocesan requirements.

Leaders and governors can clearly articulate the Church's mission in education and are passionate in their commitment to developing the spiritual lives of all members of the community regardless of faith background. Leaders actively support the Cardinal's vision for the diocese and are active in supporting the vulnerable, one recent example being the fully funded places provided for refugees from Ukraine. The school is aware of the need to continue to develop strong links with parishes and this has been identified by the school as a point for further action. Staff well-being is carefully considered by the leadership team. Governors are ambitious for the Catholic mission and lead in this area by example, offering challenge as well as support. The 5-year development plan is agreed by governors and is an important planning document for continuous improvement in Catholic life. There is a rigorous process of monitoring and self-evaluation which leads to continuous improvement, and pupil voice in Catholic life is strong. Professional development in this area is well focussed and effective, occurs regularly and is valued by staff. There is strong support for new staff through the induction programme which leads to new staff making an excellent contribution to the Catholic life of the school.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

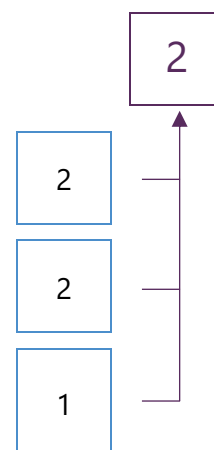
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

#### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education



Pupils are developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills required by the *Religious Education Directory*, and make good progress in knowing more, remembering more and doing more. Pupils are religiously literate and most pupils can articulate how they have made progress. Pupils think ethically and reflect using Higher Performance Learning (HPL) techniques. They ask good questions of staff and of each other. Pupils' work is well presented. In the Prep school, leaders' recent focus on outcomes in religious education has begun to result in more opportunities for extended writing. Feedback is provided and generally pupils respond well. Pupils are engaged and there is a positive working atmosphere in classrooms. In the best lessons observed, pupils were working independently and producing work of good quality, with the majority of pupils enjoying their lessons. They enjoy peer discussion and opportunities to develop their thinking. Pupils in the Prep school are beginning to self-assess against targets set. Pass rates at GCSE level are 91% and attainment at high grades (9-7) is in line with the national average.

Teaching is good at St Edmund's in both the Prep and the College. Teachers have good subject knowledge and questioning is a real strength. In a Year 5 lesson the teacher skilfully encouraged pupils to add detail to what another pupil said. The teacher in a Year 4 lesson helped pupils to consider HPL to make links in their learning. Teachers provide lots of opportunities for pupils to link learning and consider prior learning. They provide positive affirmation and feedback which encourages pupils to go deeper with their learning and pupils are often given time to reflect in lessons. In a Year 10 lesson pupils were looking at symbolism and were clearly challenged to consider how the symbolism of St Anselm is reflected in their daily lives. In a Year 12 A level theology lesson the teacher deepened student understanding through skilful questioning and making links to Church teaching. There is much good practice within the department, and this could be shared more widely. Pupils are offered a rich variety of tasks in RE including analysing art, pair discussions and hot seating, along with a good use

of ICT and relevant news reports. Evidence in books and from planning suggests that expectations in RE could be higher. Planning is not always matched to pupils' ability and opportunities for higher attaining learners to analyse and evaluate their learning are not always provided. In the best lessons observed teachers' careful planning resulted in tasks that challenged pupils' thinking. It is very encouraging that the number of students studying A level Theology in the sixth form has increased significantly in the last two years, resulting in two separate teaching groups.

Leaders have recently appointed some new RE Leads in both the Prep and the College and new systems are being implemented in both schools. The new RE Co-ordinator in the Prep has been rigorous in her approach and has worked closely with the diocesan adviser to implement learning intentions containing driver words. As a result, the theology underpinning activities is beginning to have an impact. Leaders and governors have ensured there is full parity with other core subjects in terms of resourcing, staffing and accommodation, and leaders have implemented high quality professional development to support staff delivering RE. The RE Link governor is very experienced and her frequent monitoring visits provide the department with excellent support and advice. The Head of RE in the College has an inspiring vision of teaching and learning and has worked with great passion and enthusiasm to forge a strong sense of teamwork in the department which is now beginning to bear fruit. She has an excellent level of expertise in securing this vision. Leaders have introduced HPL strategies to meet pupil needs, equipping pupils to go deeper in their knowledge and understanding. Pupils are provided with very good enrichment activities which promote pupils' learning and engagement in religious education.

## Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

### Collective worship key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

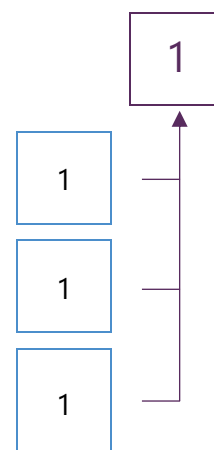
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

#### Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

#### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship



There is a deeply rooted richness of tradition in prayer and liturgy at St Edmund's. Pupils demonstrate deep engagement and participate fully and consciously with responses and singing during school Masses. The Schola Choir sang Rutter's 'For the Beauty of the Earth' during the Mass for the Ascension, which was truly uplifting and contributed to the quality of prayer during Mass, as did the beautiful organ playing. Pupils are encouraged to take on leadership roles such as Ministers of Holy Communion and altar servers. They demonstrate excellent knowledge and understanding of the Church's liturgical year and how it is expressed in the school's prayer life. Pupils experience a wide range of ways of praying including the effective use of scripture, symbol, silence, reflection and liturgical music. They work collaboratively with teachers and chaplains to prepare creative prayer experiences, for example a graffiti prayer wall, which all members of the school community were involved in. House prayer books are produced every two years, and pupils are encouraged to contribute their own prayers which are thoughtful and reflective. RE ambassadors have created a guide to religious education which is shared with Elements pupils and new joiners and contains prayers which are said at the start of each lesson. Prayer and liturgy are at the heart of this school; pupils and staff can speak about this with confidence and explain how everyone feels included.

Further opportunities for a range of prayer and liturgy experiences include tutor prayers, House Assemblies, Masses and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament (known as BC, 'Before Christ'). Pupils and staff come together as a community to support each other and to celebrate in times of joy and sorrow. In an observed tutor-prayers, scripture passages were carefully chosen to enhance prayer and liturgy and enable pupils to draw parallels to their daily lives. All staff, regardless of their faith, are deeply committed to the prayer life of the school. This was evident by the number of staff who chose voluntarily to attend 'Before Christ' during their lunchtime and how staff spoke about the centrality of prayer in their daily lives with one staff member commenting, 'It is lived and breathed, there are so

many opportunities to pray.' Staff are highly skilled and models of exemplary practice as leaders of prayer and liturgy. Classrooms have prayer corners which provide a focus for worship and the magnificent chapel is used by the whole staff community on a daily basis. The school provides a prayer space for Muslims during Ramadan which pupils appreciate. Parents are regularly invited to celebrations and Mass. During the Inspection, families were invited to attend the Valedictory Mass for Rhetoric II, which was a joyful celebration of their time at St Edmund's.

The school's policy on prayer and liturgy is carefully formulated and provides clear guidance for all staff. Leaders, including the Deputy Head Religious Life and priest-in-residence have an excellent understanding of the ways of praying that are part of the Catholic tradition. Leaders have a clear strategy for building skills of participation as pupils progress through the school, with older pupils taking on increased independence and supporting younger pupils. The school calendar and timetable revolve around the liturgical calendar and collective worship is well resourced. There are regular opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation at key times during the year. There is regular and impactful professional development for staff. The priest-in-residence is a tremendous asset to the school, who along with the highly skilled deputy head religious life, is able to help others plan and lead effective prayer and liturgy. Evaluation of the quality of prayer and liturgy is thorough and well documented. Pupil voice is an integral part of evaluation through the impressive pupil worship monitors.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Edmund's College
School unique reference number (URN)	117633
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9196115
Full postal address of the school	St Edmund's College, Old Hall Green, Ware, SG11 1DS
School phone number	01920821504
Headteacher	Matthew Mostyn
<b>Chair of Governors/Trustees</b>	Rev. Paul Raynes
School Website	<a href="http://www.stedmundscollege.org">http://www.stedmundscollege.org</a>
Trusteeship	Independent
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	All Through
Type of school	Catholic Independent School
Admissions policy	Selective
Age-range of pupils	3-19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	March 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding/Good

## The inspection team

Paul Higginson	Lead
Evelyn Ward	Team
Elizabeth Keane	Team

## Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
<b>1</b>	Outstanding	Excellent
<b>2</b>	Good	Good
<b>3</b>	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
<b>4</b>	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement