

DIOCESE OF PORTSMOUTH VALIDATION REPORT



St Edmund's Catholic School

Arundel Street, Portsmouth, PO1 1DX

URN: 116505
 Date of previous validation: February 2012
Date of this validation: 22 – 23 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Previous validation: Outstanding
	This validation: Outstanding

The school community:	Outstanding	Attainment and progress in RE:	Outstanding
The wider community:	Outstanding	Quality of teaching in RE:	Outstanding
Spiritual development:	Outstanding	Leadership and management of RE:	Outstanding
Moral development:	Outstanding	Leadership and management:	Outstanding

This is an outstanding school

- The school's mission statement, 'I can do all things with the help of God who strengthens me' (Philippians 4.13) runs through all areas of the life of the school and all in the school family are encouraged to do their best to live it out on a daily basis.
- The dedicated and highly effective leadership of the headteacher, supported by the senior leadership team and working alongside committed and knowledgeable governors, provides strong vision and direction for the work of the school. They have built up a sense of family in which all members are valued and their potential is recognised and supported.
- GCSE results in religious education (RE) have been consistently well above national averages for the last three years and students in both key stages make outstanding progress.
- RE teaching is generally outstanding, with teachers displaying excellent subject knowledge and making good use of technology to support learning.
- The lay chaplain and chaplaincy groups make a major contribution to the life of the school, drawing the whole school community together and enabling students not only to reflect but also to put their faith into action.
- The spiritual and moral development of students are both excellent and are nurtured across subject areas, opportunities for retreat and reflection inside and outside school and the wide range of chaplaincy activities.
- The overwhelming majority of parents support the ethos and mission of the school and feel welcomed by the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

In order to continue to move forward, the school should consider the following:

- How to ensure consistent differentiation across the different abilities within classroom RE.
- How to ensure consistently that teachers' feedback and pupils' responses to this leads to improvement in knowledge, understanding and skills and that time is given for pupils to respond.
- How to communicate the content of the RE curriculum to parents more effectively.

Full Report

The school as a Catholic community

The school community:	Outstanding
The wider community:	Outstanding

- The school's mission statement is embedded into every area of school life. It can be seen in the encouragement for all pupils to fulfil their potential, the high aspirations of staff and committed leadership.
- The vital importance of faith and community is evident everywhere from entry into the school, not only in physical evidence such as vibrant banners and displays which make explicit the Catholic nature of the school, but also in the prominence given to chaplaincy and the very good relationships between all members of the community.
- There are many opportunities to celebrate the diverse composition of the school community in worship, curriculum areas and the broad range of extra-curricular activities; this is also demonstrated in the support offered to pupils of other faiths as well as the school hosting the resource centre for the Sensory Impairment Service.
- Students are encouraged to achieve all that they can, personally and academically and their achievements are recognised and celebrated in many ways such as newsletters, celebration assemblies, contact with parents and badges, which students wear with pride.
- Parents are very supportive of the school; they generally feel very well-informed and this leads to good relationships between home and school. However, the school should consider how to communicate clearly the content of the RE curriculum.
- Staff and students are helped to understand the school's ethos and mission, through a well-planned process of induction. Parents speak highly of the excellent transition process, which helps pupils to settle happily into the school.
- The school has strong links with local parishes and supports many events at the cathedral, as well as contributing to diocesan events. Priests visit regularly to support the school.
- Students are encouraged to give their time and talents to the service of others, through events such as the Seniors Party run by students and the active St Vincent de Paul group, while there are also strong international links, as demonstrated by the achievement of the International Award.
- The school is active in the community, opening its doors to local groups and working with a number of local and diocesan schools, including sending staff to support specific curriculum areas. The school has recently been awarded National Support School status.

Curriculum religious education

Attainment and progress:	Outstanding
Quality of teaching:	Outstanding
Leadership and management of RE:	Outstanding

- Attainment and progress in RE are outstanding in both key stages, with many pupils exceeding their targets. However, even though both boys and girls are achieving above the national average, girls are out-performing boys in school.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge and plan effectively using a range of resources; however the department could implement a more consistent approach to differentiation to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Work books show evidence of progression and there is some evidence that pupils use teachers' advice to improve their learning. However, the department could ensure that there is a consistent approach and that pupils have time to improve their work in the lessons.
- Behaviour for learning is outstanding: pupils are fully engaged and keen to do well in class.

Teachers create a positive and supportive environment, which enables pupils to realise their potential.

- Assessment is rigorous with monitoring and standardisation taking place within the department to ensure good practice.
- The head of RE actively promotes high standards and leads by example. She inspires her team to share good practice within the department and delegates leadership opportunities.

Spiritual and moral development

Spiritual development:

Outstanding

Moral development:

Outstanding

- Spiritual development is supported by the very dedicated lay chaplain, who works closely with the many pupils who form the chaplaincy team. They plan and lead a variety of opportunities for worship e.g. the Emmanuel services, Easter service, Christmas carol service.
- Spiritual development is also nurtured through activities leading to Spiritual Badges, the Catenian Award and the Romero Award.
- Pupils and staff also have the opportunity to take part in Mass and a range of prayer experiences, e.g. the Angelus, staff prayers. Parents are also invited to take part in liturgical events. The lay chaplain's contribution is greatly appreciated by staff, parents and governors.
- Various departments support the liturgical life of the school e.g. music, PE, drama and dance, which helps to enrich the worship of the whole community.
- Pupils have opportunities for retreats/reflection in each year and staff retreats also take place annually.
- Local clergy strongly support the school, offering Mass and celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation as well as serving on the board of governors.
- Moral development is a strength of the school: pupils are well behaved and this is supported by the code of conduct and behaviour policy; bullying and racist incidents are rare and dealt with effectively.
- The rewards programme is fully supported by pupils and this impacts on behaviour.
- PSHE meets the needs of pupils and the programme has been upheld as an example of good practice.
- Pupils' appreciation of diversity is demonstrated by the organisation of a celebration event, including music and dance.
- Pupils have opportunities in a range of subjects to consider spiritual and moral issues, e.g. fair play and dealing with failure in PE; altering images of people with disabilities in ICT; empathy and self-identity in drama; genetic engineering in science and ideas of proportion in Mathematics.

Leadership and management:

Outstanding

- The headteacher demonstrates outstanding Christian leadership. This was acknowledged and valued by parents, staff and governors. The direction of the school is enhanced by a strong leadership team who, individually and collectively, contribute to the school's flourishing.
- The governors are highly knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are regular visitors to the school, for example, when acting as 'Governor of the fortnight'. They are deeply committed to promoting and developing the Catholic life of the school.
- Robust and challenging systems for self-evaluation are in place at all levels, including the governing body. This rigorous self-evaluation then leads into strategic planning at departmental and whole school levels. These lead to constant challenge and the promotion of high standards in all aspects of school life.

- The potential of all staff is recognised and developed as demonstrated by two staff achieving the Teaching Leaders Award.
- The school has a well-structured approach to the diocesan self-review process, including a range of stakeholders. Consideration should be given to including parents and pupils more explicitly in the process.
- The school has effectively carried out the areas for development highlighted in the previous validation.

School details

Name of school:	St Edmund's Catholic School
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll:	884
Chair of Governors:	Mr David Knight
Headteacher:	Mr Simon Graham

St Edmund's is a slightly smaller than average secondary school. Its Catholic pupils come mainly from five parishes in Portsmouth. A higher than average number of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and the percentage of students whose first language is not English is more than double the national average. The percentage of pupils eligible for pupil premium support is well above the national average. The school has provision for pupils with sensory impairment.

Information about this validation

This report to the Bishop of the Diocese under Canon 806 of the Code of Canon Law is also the report to the governors of the school on religious education. For Catholic maintained schools, the report also fulfils the requirements of Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

Validation Team

Lead validator:	Miss A-M Brister
Assistant validator:	Mrs B Barrett-John

Activities carried out as part of the validation

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethos walk • Meetings and discussions with student groups • Two assembly observations • Attendance at staff briefing • Discussion on the school's self-review documentation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work scrutiny • Meetings and discussions with various members of the school community • Two tutor observations • Parental survey • Five lesson observations including joint observation with a member of the school leadership team |
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Conclusion

The validators would like to thank the governors, headteacher, leadership team, head of RE, staff, parish priest, school lay chaplain, parents and students of St Edmund's Catholic School for their preparatory work for the validation, which forms part of the school's regular self-review cycle. They would also like to express their appreciation for the warmth of welcome they received and the support given during the validation process.