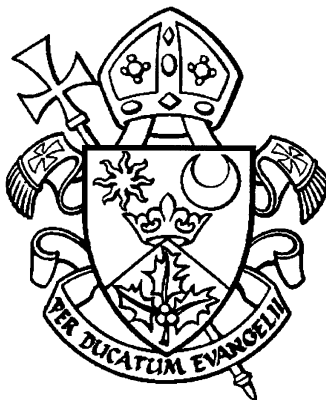


THE VALIDATION REPORT – SUMMARY



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.

NAME OF SCHOOL	St Edmund's Catholic School
ADDRESS	Arundel Street Portsmouth PO1 1RX
URN	116505
CHAIR OF GOVERNORS	Mr Barry Wright
HEADTEACHER	Mrs Isabelle O'Mara
NAMES OF VALIDATORS	Mr Paul Barras Mrs Julie Oldroyd
DATES OF THE VALIDATION VISIT	21 st and 22 nd October 2009

Information about the school

Number of pupils on roll	918
Number of boys	494
Number of girls	424
Number of statemented pupils	12
Percentage of Catholic pupils	38%
Number of teaching staff	57
Number of support staff	68
Percentage of Catholic staff	25%

St Edmund's is a voluntary aided, medium-sized 11 – 16 Catholic comprehensive school located in the Charles Dickens Ward in Portsmouth. Catholic pupils come mainly from the five parishes in the Portsmouth area. The majority of pupils are from a white British background. A minority of pupils have other ethnic origins and there is an increasing number of pupils for whom English is an additional language, reflecting the school population in the area generally.

The school has specialist status in the humanities. It has a good reputation and is regularly over-subscribed. The school possesses a pleasant range of well-maintained facilities, including a chapel, that provides a good quality environment for the pupils' learning and social activities.

The school's effectiveness in providing Catholic education

St Edmund's Catholic Comprehensive School is a good Catholic school with many outstanding features. A Christian vision is made evident in key areas of the school, especially in the quality of care shown for every individual student. Indeed, all within the community are valued and their needs are well met. Two outstanding examples of work being undertaken to strengthen and clarify the school's purpose are the clear mission statement, which is rooted in the Gospel and the excellence of the chaplaincy. In these ways the school makes Christ known to all its pupils. The school is also now striving to achieve the confidence of the cluster of Catholic schools in the City of Portsmouth, in order to establish a good working relationship. It is also seeking to foster good links with the local parishes.

The teaching of religious education (RE) is given prominence in the school. Pupils make good progress in RE. The quality of provision has been most notably enhanced at key stage 4, where examination courses have been chosen to match the pupils' abilities and build their interest.

All aspects of school life contribute to the spiritual and moral development of pupils. The traditions and practices of the Catholic Church provide a context for all aspects of school life, enriching the worship and promoting and stimulating the spiritual development of all the community. The very positive impact of the school is seen in the words, attitudes and actions of students and staff.

a) Key strengths of the school

- Leadership and management at all levels are good and having an increasing and positive impact in raising standards throughout the school. The headteacher in particular provides principled and inspiring leadership, which in turn gives strong and clear direction for the school.
- Senior leaders provide high level support for the spiritual and moral dimension of the school.
- Members of the school's governing body is highly supportive and has a clear understanding of the vision and mission of the school, working closely with the senior leadership team.
- The contribution of the clergy enables the Eucharist to be at the heart of the community.
- The recent appointment of the chaplain has made a significant impact.
- The considerable contribution being made by the school's focus on supporting individual pupils through the learning support and inclusion departments.
- The recent development of the roles of year leaders and co-ordination of personal, social and health education (PSHE) has enhanced the support given to students both pastorally and academically.
- There are strong links with a range of outside agencies providing individual support to meet pupils' needs.
- Pupil voice is fully established, through a vibrant school council, school prefects and the growing numbers of students joining the chaplaincy team.
- The range of links established within the local community to enable the school to increase the number of opportunities and enrichment activities available to students.
- Improvement in academic progress, especially at KS4, indicates a strong, common purpose.
- The RE department team is making a significant contribution to the school's aim to raise attainment.
- The regular, attractive and comprehensive school newsletter and the school's website provide excellent means of communication and reflect the school's commitment to its values.
- Pupils' attitude and behaviour are a credit to themselves and the school: relationships between staff and students, as well as between the students themselves, truly reflect the Gospel values promoted by the school.

b) Key areas for development

Whilst the validators recognise the school's impressive efforts to put in place all the key components of a vibrant Catholic community, senior staff should now focus on the following areas of development:

- Continue with the efforts being recently made to establish an effective partnership with the cluster of Catholic feeder primary schools in the City of Portsmouth and put in place the means to create effective links with the local parishes.
- Continue to develop the induction and inservice training activities to enable all staff to deepen their awareness of the nature of the school's common mission.
- Seek for and develop a deeper sense of spirituality in all areas of school life and extend these efforts to include parents.
- Put in place current plans to establish a second in department position for RE.
- In RE the further development of the schemes of work to include clear assessment and marking policies. These schemes should also make explicit the range of teaching and learning strategies, which will provide the appropriate level of challenge for all students.

c) Progress since the last validation

- Current chaplaincy provision reflects the important steps the school has taken to reaffirm its central role in the life of the school.
- The school's mission statement has been reshaped. It now needs to be further embedded and inform both the school strategic aims and its policies.
- Steps have been taken to improve INSET for new staff, so that they fully subscribe to the ethos of the school.
- The quality of prayer and acts of worship and liturgy have been improved by the relatively recent efforts of the present chaplain.
- The whole staff have been brought together in a common effort to both raise standards and to strengthen the school's Catholic ethos.

d) Summary of parents' views of the school

Parents support the very caring nature of the school and recognise its strengths as a Catholic community. They feel welcomed. They are kept well-informed by the weekly school newsletter. In addition, they confirm the view that RE is generally well-taught. Some parents would like to have easier access to the staff and suggested a 'drop-in' with the year leaders scheduled after 5pm, similar to the headteacher's current morning session. Some parents very much appreciate the opportunities that their children have to raise money for deserving causes and to be involved in a variety of liturgies. Some parents also praised the excellence of the transition process from year 6 into year 7 at St Edmund's and, in particular, the quality of the school's induction programme for the 'nurture group', made up of pupils needing additional support.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE FOR THE VALIDATION

As part of the validation process:

Two validators spent a preliminary day in the school, meeting with the headteacher and the deputy headteachers, discussing the school's self-review report, touring the site of the school and meeting arrange of staff and students.

The validation took place over two school days, when interviews and discussions were held with:

- The headteacher;
- Two foundation members of the governing body;
- Three parents with children in a range of year groups;
- The member of the senior leader with responsibility for RE and members of the RE department;
- Two members of the senior team with responsibility for PSHE;
- Four year leaders;
- The chaplain;
- The local parish priests, who frequently minister in the school;
- The special needs co-ordinator;
- The social inclusion manager;
- Student members of the school council;
- The head boy and head girl.

Four religious education lessons were observed.

Three acts of collective worship were observed, including a form Mass.

A sample of students' religious education exercise books and work folders was scrutinised.

Religious education resources were seen.

An analysis was made of responses to the parental questionnaire.

Informal discussions were held with the staff and students over the three days that the validators were present in school.

A range of documentation from the school was scrutinised, including: the school prospectus, the school development plan, the RE handbook, the department evaluation form for religious education, examination results, the school self evaluation form and folders of evidence and the Ofsted Report (June, 2009).

Informal feedback was given to the senior leadership team at the end the process.

Conclusion

The validators would like to thank the headteacher, staff, parish priest, governors, parents and pupils of St Edmund's school for their warmth of welcome and their open and honest contribution to discussions. They would also like to thank in particular the senior leadership team for their preparatory work preceding the validation and the RE department and the chaplaincy team for their high level of cooperation during the process.