

Report of the Denominational (Section 48) Inspection of
Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

St Edmund's Catholic Primary School

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DFE No: 926/3311
URN: 124764

For Catholic Diocese of East Anglia



Chair of Governors: Mrs Nichole Barber

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Denominational Inspector: Mrs Rosemary Barker

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DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

St. Edmund's is a two-form entry 4-9 first school in the town of Bury St. Edmunds serving the Catholic community of Bury and surrounding villages. Pupils come from four parishes - St. Edmund's, St. Mary's, Our Lady's, and St. Thomas of Canterbury in Bury, Stowmarket, Thetford and Brandon respectively. There are approximately 300 pupils on roll; 85% are Catholic. Pupils come mostly from socio-economically advantaged backgrounds, with numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals low at 4.3%. The proportion of pupils from Ethnic Minority backgrounds has grown in recent years to 20%, with 13 languages spoken within the school. 8% of pupils have Special Educational Needs (SEN) with one pupil supported by an SEN Statement. The school is over-subscribed and must apply its admission policy to allocate places. Successful appeals have raised pupil numbers in Key Stage 2 classes. The school has an effective partnership with a small Catholic primary school in Sudbury providing opportunities for shared good practice and professional development.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC SCHOOL.

Grade: 1

St Edmund's School is an outstanding Catholic school where pupils are nurtured and empowered to live their mission statement and learn together in God's love. Prayer and worship are of central importance in the school's life. Its strong Catholic identity is visible and real in its everyday life. The committed headteacher leads a strong leadership team, fully supported by the Governing Body and School Chaplain. Together, they effectively promote a strong sense of spiritual purpose. Staff work as a team, demonstrating the values inherent in the Catholic ethos and are committed to the high profile given to Religious Education (RE).

Relationships within the school are very good. Pupils' personal, spiritual and moral development is outstanding. Good behaviour and positive attitudes were consistently evidenced in whole school gatherings, small group work in class, and individual responses and application to tasks set. Pupils produce quality work and make good progress in RE.

The self-evaluation of the school is accurate and comprehensive. The headteacher has a good overall view of the school's strengths and development needs. Issues from the last inspection have been fully met and are regularly revisited in staff professional development sessions to ensure new teachers are fully informed of school expectations and practices. The school is united and focussed in its aim to provide the best possible Catholic education for its pupils. All staff are committed to the success of the school. Uncertainties within the ongoing re-organisation of schools in Suffolk have raised challenges for the school, especially as the planned changes due in September 2012 will mean the school being linked with a different phase partnership school. The Headteacher has identified good opportunities within this situation for effective school development.

The school is highly valued within the local community and a strong partnership between school, parents and parish supports the growth of shared Catholic vision. The school has a very good capacity to improve.

What the school needs to do to improve further?

Using opportunities of the school partnership and school re-organisation programme positively to :-

- broaden teachers' knowledge of the next steps in RE learning and attainment as a preparation for possible Year 5/6 learners in school and also to provide extension for higher achievers in Year 4;
- maintain awareness of the induction process for first time Year 5/6 pupils in the partner school so that the St. Edmund's is well placed to successfully address any changes necessary following the appeals process decision.

Develop a quiet space within the newly acquired environmental area to encourage and support reflection and meditation opportunities, and "Godly Play" activities.

PUPILS. How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups. Grade 1

The Catholic life of the school is of outstanding benefit to the pupils. Pupils said "*...it's a happy place to learn*", "*...you learn a lot and it makes learning fun*". Behaviour is very good, "*...we don't have any bullying*". Pupils are fully aware of and commit to the high school expectations demanded by the school mission statement "Learning Together in God's Love". They show respect towards adults and each other. They acknowledge that teachers are "*...kind and caring*" and that they "*...listen to you*". There is a strong sense of school community and family. Most pupils "*...nearly all*" enjoy RE lessons especially when these involve practical activities such as role-play, visits, meditation and 'Godly Play'. They appreciate the wide variety of after-school clubs available to them; they look forward to sharing and celebrating personal achievement in the weekly celebration assemblies. Pupils' views and ideas are sought and taken into account through the School Council. They led the consultation process on the introduction of a school house points system and sought pupil views on school summer uniform for boys. School polo shirts are now a popular alternative to formal shirts and ties.

Pupils respond very well to the prayer life of the school. They understand the importance of prayer and participate with ease and respect. They write their own prayers as part of their religious education learning, and know and use traditional prayers. Pupils undertake their responsibilities seriously in all aspects of preparation, organisation and participation in the Mass. Before Mass, they set up and prepared the altar, made the hall ready and greeted visitors. They showed independence and impeccable good behaviour when entering and leaving the hall; they were reverent throughout; there was high quality singing (and signing) of hymns, with a recorder accompaniment for one hymn - a joyous addition. Pupils knew the responses and again, their signing enhanced the worship experience. Each class had a specific role and during the course of their school life the opportunity to serve at Mass, to present readings, to write and offer bidding prayers is shared by all pupils.

Pupils make good progress in religious literacy during their time in the school. They achieve age appropriate levels of attainment and many exceed this. There are strong links with other curriculum areas with good transfer of skills between subjects evidenced in books and displays. Pupils take a pride in their religious education work. Books are well presented and show comprehensive coverage of the curriculum.

In Early Years classes, pupils visited the prayer tables and handled artefacts in free time. They recognised the images and knew stories about Jesus and Mary. In Year 1 classes, pupil dialogue witnessed showed understanding of the meaning and the use of such items as the rosary and the bible. A 'Holy, Holy, Holy' book with computer photos of pupils showing the signing and words of

the new response for this part of the Mass demonstrated pupil's familiarity with the new Mass and was an effective aid to learning.

The regular curriculum is suspended for a whole school project with a spiritual or RE focus during 'St. Edmund's Week' when cross curricular input promotes innovation and embraces new approaches to learning.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS. How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic life of the school? Grade 1

The Headteacher's clear vision for the Catholic ethos of the school is underpinned by comprehensive policies and planning and shared by staff. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development and growth is a strength of the school. Shared professional development through the school partnership has been seen as a valuable opportunity. As coordinator the headteacher has built and maintained a high profile for RE affirming its importance as a core subject. Published and school developed schemes of work are in place providing a structured framework for RE. Teachers are guided and supported well in the delivery of the curriculum. The benefit of widening RE leadership through the appointment of a new RE Co-ordinator is recognised by the Headteacher.

The work of the 'Godly Play' team from the cathedral and the commitment of the School Chaplain, despite a very busy parish schedule of responsibilities, reinforce the Catholic ethos. His 'signing' of hymns and responses during Mass and the child-friendly readings and homily connected with pupils and enriched their worship experience.

Governors fulfil their statutory and canonical responsibilities. They are pro-active, supportive and interested in all aspects of the school. The re-organisation of Suffolk schools has involved governors in both County and Diocesan meetings and continuing discussions. Formal monitoring by the RE Governor takes place regularly as well as informal monitoring at school events and liturgy celebrations. Classroom visits and lesson observations, work scrutiny and regular 'Learning Walks' are used to inform the school's self-evaluations.

The school is a welcoming, inclusive community. Workshops designed to support the integration of the increased ethnic minority population in school have been shared and used in other parts of the county. A member of the Polish speaking community employed as a Teaching assistant and a Polish parent appointed to the Governing Body have further supported inclusion of these families in school.

The school has strong links with parishes and schools in Palestine and Cambodia. Reciprocal visits by members of staff in each community have extended pupils' global and cultural knowledge and understanding. Highly successful fund-raising by pupils has enabled the purchase of necessary equipment for a new school and the school's ongoing commitment to third world education has provided the financing for training and employment of a teacher.

Pupil interaction with residents in a local care home, reading and playing games, fosters compassion and their understanding of the needs of others.

The school web-site, newsletters and 'Learning Together' leaflets actively inform parents of school activities and invite feedback. The Head and Governors run a termly Parent Forum enabling parents and carers to contribute to and comment on school development. There is an active 'Friends' Association' in school and parent volunteers help in a range of school activities and on school trips.

Other faiths and cultures are taught with visits from other faith members of the community broadening pupils' knowledge and understanding of other cultures and beliefs.

PROVISION. How effective is the provision for Catholic education: Grade 1

Worship and prayer are integral in the daily actions of the school community with the regular celebration of Holy Mass confirming the value placed on the school's sacramental life. Praying of the Rosary in May and October, and Stations of the Cross in Lent, reinforce Catholic traditions. 'Travelling Cribs' during Advent engage whole families in prayer as pupils offer a home to the Holy Family and explore the meaning of Christmas through the different materials and artefacts accompanying each crib. The school chaplain hears confessions in school during Advent and the summer term. First Holy Communion preparation classes take place after school and Catholic pupils attending other schools also participate.

Each classroom has a prayer table providing a focus for prayer, reflection and learning with changing displays of appropriate liturgical religious artefacts, bibles and books. Pupils demonstrated interest and knowledge. Traditional prayers were displayed alongside prayers written by the children themselves. Pupils explained how the beautifully decorated stones in Year 2 classrooms were used in personal reflection and meditation.

The quality of religious education lessons seen was good. Learning objectives and success criteria were clear and explicit. In parallel classes, Year 4 pupils reflecting on a previous session's 'freeze frames' showed good recall, and the question and answer session around this enabled them to develop their thinking. Teacher/pupil interaction supported high quality pupil dialogue and pupils quickly engaged with the well organised and purposeful task that followed. Teacher knowledge was secure and gave good guidance to enable pupils to make informed decisions.

Year 3 pupils enjoyed the 'Godly Play' sessions. The simple wooden figures used to enact the Pentecost story held the children's attention totally. The wide range of spontaneous, individual, creative responses to the story all reflected key elements of the event which pupils were articulate in explaining. The 'I wonder' plenary with no right or wrong answers to inhibit thinking demonstrated high level thinking skills.

Regular pupil assessment, work scrutiny and moderation in RE are carried out as in all core curriculum subjects. Pupils' work meets and in many cases exceeds age related expectations. Positive marking in books using the child friendly marking scheme applied to all subjects, includes developmental comments and questions leading to spiritual/religious growth. RE is very well resourced.

There is good coverage of the RE curriculum. The school uses both the 'Here I Am' and 'The Way, the Truth, and the Light' published schemes. In addition, the school has produced its own scheme of work around the Bible stories of both Old and New Testaments which enhanced study of the new responses in Mass. Children are encouraged to think deeply about issues and challenged. Work and outcomes are appropriately differentiated to meet individual needs. Children's work is in evidence throughout the school in colourful and attractive wall displays.

Other faiths are taught and festivals recognised and celebrated, particularly those specific to the school population.

The quality of the curriculum is very good and suitable for the age and abilities of the learners. It fulfils the requirement of the Bishops' Conference with 10% of curriculum time used for religious education.



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Letter to pupils explaining the findings from the diocesan inspection.

7th May 2012

Dear Pupils

Diocesan Inspection of St Edmund's Primary Catholic School, Bury St. Edmunds.

Thank you for making me so welcome at your school. Thank you to all those pupils who spoke to me especially the group from the School Council. I was very interested in your views of your school. I enjoyed being present with you in Years 3 & 4 for part of your Religious Education lessons and was pleased to see how well presented the work was in the RE books of all year groups. It was a great privilege to be able to share Holy Mass with you.

Here are some of the things I especially liked:

- The strong Catholic ethos of your school that provides many opportunities for prayer and worship.
- Your singing and recorder playing at Mass and your signing of responses and hymns.
- You are friendly and considerate to each other and are well cared for by your teachers.
- You are encouraged to think deeply in a calm quiet atmosphere.
- The school provides very good opportunities for you to develop personally, spiritually and morally.
- The enjoyable and interesting tasks that your teachers plan to aid your religious education learning.

I have asked your teachers and governors to focus on the changes happening to schools in your area so that you benefit fully from them and also to develop a quiet space within the new environmental area for personal meditation and reflection, and for use in Godly Play sessions.

Thank you again for your help. I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Rosemary Barker

Diocesan Inspector