



# St Edward's Catholic College

URN: 136735

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Liverpool

27–28 November 2024

## Summary of key findings

### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

2

#### 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

2

#### Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

2

#### Collective worship (p.7)

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

2

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

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

Fully

## Compliance statement

- The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements laid down by Archbishop of Liverpool.
- The school has responded fully to the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection.

## What the school does well

- The headteacher has provided an inspirational momentum for school improvement. He is trusted, caring towards students and staff and has a compelling vision to move St Edward's forward.
- The subject leader for religious education is astute and recognises the strengths within her subject team.
- St Edward's students are formidable ambassadors for the school. They show intelligence and have a developed resolve to faithfully live out the mission of the school.
- Opportunities for students to engage in life changing immersion, via the Edmund Rice network, are a distinctive feature of St Edward's College, seldom available to young people.
- Chaplaincy resources are rooted in scripture. The coordinator shows skill in the production of weekly prayer and liturgy resources which provide a common point of reference for the spiritual formation of students and staff.

## What the school needs to improve

- Catholic social teaching is not yet embedded as part of the whole curriculum, which limits students' and staff's understanding. The recently started work to change this should be accelerated so that, collectively, stakeholders' ability to articulate this improves.
- The needs of all students, particularly the most able and those with additional needs, are not always met in religious education lessons. Teachers should continually assess pupil progress in and between lessons and resourcing should be adaptive to ensure all students can fully access the curriculum.
- Student experiences of prayer and liturgy are too variable and do not always provide them with sacred time. Leaders should undertake a comprehensive review of provision and strategy to ensure that there are improvements for all.

## 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

2

#### Provision

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

2

#### Leadership

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

2

2

St Edward's older students are aware that the school has a unique mission statement and say its importance has been recently elevated. Nevertheless, they have difficulty pinpointing it as a noteworthy phrase. Students are unequivocal in their appreciation of the fact that they feel valued and loved and are highly complimentary towards St Edward's headteacher. They feel trusted, safe, and cared for and this has impacted on their moral development, enhancing the link to the Blessed Edmund Rice values. Opportunities for students to participate in Catholic social teaching activities are extensive. These are at a local level for most students but, for key student ambassadors, evident at a global level. Despite this, even older students struggle to express the principles of Catholic social teaching and their links to subject learning. Students enjoy the harmonious atmosphere in the school and the positive rewards strategies, newly adopted by the school, capture moments of success; this breeds a culture of mutual respect and support. Students' awareness of the needs of others is epitomised by sixth formers' volunteer work at the *Seel Street Soup Kitchen*. Some younger students take up active roles in the chaplaincy team including *Faith in Action*. At senior level, more extensive opportunities impact on students' formation.

The Blessed Edmund Rice charism provides a solid foundation for the school's Catholic identity but plans to review the mission statement are currently on hold. Staff show appreciation for leaders' drive to cultivate a sense of belonging and everyone feels supported. Large events, including students' performances at the Cathedral, show what is best about this community. Demographic changes means St Edward's is now more diverse and leaders nurture inclusivity. Describing this approach in terms of how it makes students and staff from ethnic minorities feel, one governor said, "I am walking with them, and I feel I belong". Typifying staff generosity, the creation of a *forest walk* in school grounds is a fine example of role modelling and is appreciated

by students. The recent *root and branch* adjustment to pastoral care has strengthened this provision. Corridors and larger spaces represent the school's heritage although there is an opportunity to create prayer corners in classrooms. The chaplaincy team is led by a skilled and experienced coordinator, however, since it is part time, impact is limited. Leaders have improved relationships, sex and health education. Its provision is good and upheld by *Life to The Full* materials for which there is appropriate training. Leaders have shown vision in commissioning an external review to further verify the programme.

Common approaches evident in the creation of policies would improve if they referenced the school mission statement. The school engages well with Liverpool Archdiocese and its education training partners. The school fosters positive relationships with parents who have high expectations and newsletter updates appropriately reference the school's Catholic life. Although Catholic social teaching is lived by students, it is not explicitly conveyed as part of the curriculum. Leaders show consideration for the health and workload needs of staff. Governors have shown humility in accepting that adjustments to whole school strategy were necessary and, collectively, there exists a great deal of expertise to move the school forward. Effective channels of communication with school leaders have been speedily established which will greatly enable the change agenda. Beyond the headteacher, not all self-evaluation of the school's Catholic life has been accurate, and this is an improvement need. The school uses *student voice* to gauge the quality of the curriculum and, last year, prayer and liturgy. The recent adjustment to training and guidance for Catholic life and prayer and liturgy will generate improved knowledge and skills across the staff. Induction processes for new staff are secure and training includes *Immersion* in the Edmund Rice values.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

**Pupil outcomes**

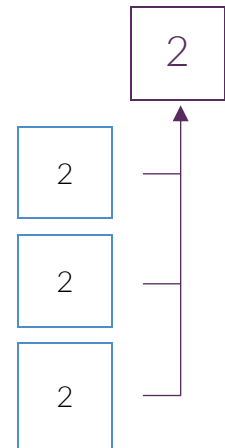
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

**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



Most pupils display a secure knowledge and understanding in religious education and they are developing skills that reflect the content of the *Religious Education Directory* and GCSE specifications. Many, but not all, students make good progress, and this is mostly reflected in outcomes at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5. Students demonstrate a religious literacy that is relative to their age and capacity. Nevertheless, they are generally unclear about the links between Catholic social teaching and how they live their lives. Recall strategies are embedded and students engage positively with these opportunities illustrating that they can remember key concepts. Students are able to work independently and show resilience. Students' self-assessment, using coloured pen, often shows that they understand what they need to do to improve, however, this is not yet embedded across all lessons. Weaker examples seen are not always addressed promptly. A joyful willingness from students to answer questions and share knowledge shows that they are mostly engaged. Overall attainment at Key Stage 4 is consistently above national averages, but the picture is less positive for the most able. These students need additional challenge in the curriculum to push them further.

Jointly, the religious education department show assurance in their curriculum knowledge and skills and there is collaboration between team members. Leaders know when lessons are stimulating and recognise aspects of teaching which could improve. St Edward's students' natural inclination to model positive learning behaviours is supportive in allowing teachers to set high expectations in lessons. Grouping by mixed ability sometimes presents a challenge to teachers who need to do better when adapting tasks for able and for weaker students. Work is assessed at appropriate intervals, and inspectors witnessed effective questioning in each key stage with the best examples in Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5. Teachers follow the guidance in the school policy on feedback; this includes using whole class feedback, peer marking and live

marking. Some teachers engage with these approaches more successfully than others. Opportunities in religious education, and other lessons, for students to reflect on their own spiritual development is not widespread and, for some students, their skills in constructing arguments lack depth. Student books illustrate that there are a variety of approaches adopted by teachers in the way they present course content. Common recall tasks are a good foundation and most students are provided with opportunities for extended writing.

The new *Religious Education Directory* is now delivered in Year 7 and Year 8, with Year 9 included from September 2025. In key stages three and four religious education is given appropriate weight and importance regarding time and resources. A justifiable focus on relationships, sex and health education in Key Stage 5 means that the allocated time for core religious education is slightly blurred and, whilst compliant, the two should be clearly distinctive. Leaders have ensured that known networks are used to support professional development including exam boards, access to archdiocesan links and the adoption of coaching mechanisms. The department is well led by an experienced subject leader. Tasks, such as curriculum design, are delegated to colleagues but support is provided. Schemes of learning and assessments are well thought out and this impacts on the good outcomes for students. The religious education curriculum is a faithful reflection of the new directory, with students aware of where they are heading on their study journey. Enrichment originating in religious education does not always reflect the wealth of additional opportunities, such as with the Edmund Rice Network, at a whole school level. Leaders similarly undertake monitoring and evaluation exercises for all subjects; whilst these identify some good practices and improvement needs, the process is not yet precise enough to spearhead improvement.

## 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

2

**Provision**

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

**Leadership**

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

2

2

St Edward's students are a major strength of the school. The school is uniquely positioned as the only Catholic secondary cathedral school in England. St Edward's is the Choir School for Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral. Consequently, many students in and beyond the choir gain a privileged insight into the norms and practices of the Church. Morning prayer is characterised by choral response, and volunteer readers do so confidently. The students understand that the liturgical year and deep-rooted musical tradition generates a deeper appreciation when this is used. During the inspection, senior prefects delivered an assembly with flair and confidence; this resonated with Year 7 and provided a clear example of students as role models. This was an excellent example of student leadership which is starting to be engrained more into the school. Each week forms take turns, guided by the lay chaplain, to write Friday prayers for the whole school. This is a positive step towards sustained student leadership of prayer and liturgy. Students confidently articulate how the stillness and opportunities for reflection help them at the start of their busy days. Sixth-form students have a real sense of connectivity with prayer and links to the Cathedral deepen this. One sixth-form student used the words of St. Augustine from his Dissertation on the Psalms: "to sing is to pray twice".

Each day begins with prayer at the start of the first lesson which has an additional five minutes. This reflects the liturgical calendar but also includes the celebration of feast days. Resources provided by the lay chaplain are good, rooted in scripture, and provide opportunities for students and staff to connect with their daily lives. Although conceptually workable, the quality of provision focused on these five minutes is variable, and this results in mixed experiences. The school is aware of these inconsistencies including two other disadvantages: not all sixth form students are present to benefit and the imminence of the subject lesson encroaches onto sacred time. The school is blessed to have such an array of musical talent and this is used effectively to

enhance whole year group prayer and liturgy. In assemblies, expectations have recently increased; explicit modelling is normative and designed to ensure that all benefit from a higher standard. The school recognises its good fortune in the presence of a part time priest chaplain providing frequent opportunities for all to experience Mass. The parent and carer survey demonstrates strong support for the Catholic education their children receive.

The new headteacher has a very clear vision to make St Edward's College the Catholic school of choice. The process of transformation has begun and he and his close team have effectively engaged and remotivated the school community. The headteacher and governors understand what long standing traditions are worth preserving but also the areas that need to change to move the school forward. The quality of prayer and liturgy is no exception, and leaders acknowledge the aspects of provision that require improvement. Last summer, students were engaged in a review of prayer and liturgy, and this informed training which, in turn, led to improvements such as silent reflection. Nevertheless, there is still variability in the quality of delivery of prayer and liturgy. Teachers need more support with their own formation, specifically in their ability to appreciate what high quality prayer and liturgy looks like. The school acknowledges that its monitoring and evaluation of prayer and liturgy needs to become much more systematic so that it informs professional development at whole school and individual levels. The school has started its journey of self-evaluation and improvement, initial actions have occurred, plans are in development, but this has not yet impacted to eradicate inconsistency.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Edward's Catholic College
School unique reference number (URN)	136735
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3415900
Full postal address of the school	St Edward's Catholic College, Sandfield Park, Liverpool, L12 1LF
School phone number	0151 281 1999
Headteacher	Lee Fabia
Chair of governors	John O'Brien
School Website	<a href="http://www.st-edwards.co.uk">http://www.st-edwards.co.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Congregation of Christian Brothers
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Edmund Rice Academy Trust
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	2 <sup>nd</sup> May 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

## The inspection team

Phillip Mooney	Lead
Andrew Dawson	Team
Alison Benson	Team

## Key to grade judgements

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