

St Edmund's Catholic School

Address: Old Charlton Road, Dover, Kent, CT16 2QB

Unique reference number (URN): 141217

Inspection report: 9 September 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	●
Expected standard	● ● ● ● ●
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✓ **Safeguarding standards met**

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

This is a highly inclusive school. Leaders' approach to inclusion is robust and strategic. They have high expectations of all pupils. Pupils' needs are identified swiftly and accurately. Staff work tirelessly to remove barriers to wellbeing and learning so that all pupils can access the full curriculum.

The house system is central to the school's inclusive culture. This approach ensures that every pupil is known and their personal and academic aspirations are championed. Leaders' approach to inclusive practice particularly benefits vulnerable pupils, whose challenges are understood carefully by staff.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported expertly. Staff throughout the school, including those in the specialist resourced provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and speech, language and communication needs, are well trained and make effective adaptations for pupils.

Leaders' work to support disadvantaged pupils is extremely effective. Pupil premium funding is used skilfully to improve pupils' achievement and attendance. For example, the school's approach to helping the weakest readers has had a positive impact on pupils' reading skills as well as their confidence in reading.

Pupils known to social care and young carers are thriving in the school. Leaders have built excellent relationships with the virtual school and local authority. Parents and carers feel fully involved in their child's education. Alternative provision is always used in the best interest of pupils.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

Pupils generally achieve well and increasingly so over time. Pupils' achievement in GCSEs is typically above that of their peers in similar schools. They make secure progress over time. Work in lessons is usually of a high quality. Pupils take pride in the work they produce and are increasingly ambitious in their GCSE aspirations.

Achievement across the curriculum is inclusive and reflects the school's highly effective approach to inclusion. Disadvantaged pupils perform comparably well to their peers in national examinations. Pupils who have gaps in their reading, communication or mathematical skills receive useful extra teaching to help them improve.

Pupils are well prepared for their next stages of education, employment or training. This is due not only to their achievement in national examinations but also to the confidence and resilience they have developed during their time at the school. Leaders work tirelessly to

ensure that the majority of pupils go on to sustain appropriate destinations in education, employment or training.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Pupils generally attend school regularly. Leaders have created a positive and welcoming culture, which means pupils want to come to school. This is particularly the case for the most vulnerable pupils, whose attendance is higher than that of their peers nationally. Staff work together to promote the importance of high attendance. Leaders provide timely and thoughtful support for pupils who may struggle to come to school, quickly removing any barriers. Leaders are currently embedding further strategies to increase the attendance of all pupils and to reduce persistent absence rates.

Pupils are kind and considerate. They behave well and show respect for the school environment. The school is a calm and orderly place, where pupils learn and socialise in a harmonious community. Disruption in lessons is rare. Where pupils do make mistakes, sanctions are used appropriately and effectively to help them to improve their behaviour. Pupils are increasingly displaying self-motivation in their learning. All staff have high expectations of behaviour. Bullying is rare. When it does occur, it is dealt with effectively and quickly. Pupils are proud that discrimination is not accepted here. Staff adapt their support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities expertly so that all pupils can thrive in a calm and warm environment.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed a broad, ambitious and inclusive curriculum. Across all subjects, the curriculum is well sequenced. It successfully achieves the school's aims to help pupils to 'grow emotionally, academically, spiritually, physically, morally and socially'.

The curriculum is generally taught well. Carefully crafted activities enable pupils to deepen their knowledge effectively over time. In many lessons, teachers check pupils' understanding regularly. They then immediately adapt the next steps in learning appropriately. However, this practice is not embedded consistently across the whole school. This means that there are times when pupils do not make rapid progress in their learning. Teachers are experts in their subjects. They receive effective professional learning opportunities to help refine their practice. Leaders have a secure understanding of the quality of teaching in the school. Support is put in place quickly when standards fall short of leaders' high expectations.

Teachers provide ample opportunities for pupils to develop their written language skills. Pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge are supported well across the whole curriculum. Leaders have ambitious plans to further develop pupils' oracy skills.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well in their learning. This includes through the effective support of a team of expert teaching assistants.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders are ambitious and always act in the best interests of pupils. They lead with passion, tenacity and moral purpose. This is particularly evident in leaders' tireless work to ensure pupils are safe and happy.

With effective support from the trust, school leaders have brought about many improvements in the school. For example, leaders have embraced inclusive practices, which have especially enhanced their understanding of pupils' behaviour and wellbeing needs. Changes to their inclusive approach have been introduced and monitored in a measured and thoughtful way. This ensured that the impact of that work was rapid and sustained.

Leaders, including those responsible for governance, have a generally accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for further development. Both the local governing committee and trust boards have a range of expertise and educational experience, which has enabled them to challenge and support school leaders effectively. The school is a valued member of the Catholic community through its work with the Diocese of Southwark.

Staff feel greatly valued and are very proud to work at the school. One member of staff, representing the views of many, commented that, 'There is an excellent culture of trust, collaboration and continuous improvement.' Leaders carefully consider staff workload. Staff benefit from tailored professional learning. This includes working with a range of other schools. Teachers new to the profession receive effective support.

Leaders work hard to build effective relationships with parents and carers. The majority of parents are very positive about the school. For example, one parent said, 'We are very happy with our child's progress at St Edmund's.'

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Pastoral provision is particularly effective. Pupils really value the high-quality support in the school. Leaders place great importance on pupils' wellbeing. For example, a team of 'emotionally available adults' support pupils expertly. Pupils can also access a welcoming wellbeing space during social times. Through the school houses, pastoral staff understand the needs of pupils extremely well. They ensure that pupils are safe and happy.

Leaders have developed a coherent personal development programme that prepares pupils for life in a diverse modern Britain. The curriculum carefully responds to local and national issues. Leaders ensure that pupils receive age-appropriate lessons on relationships and sex education. Pupils speak maturely about healthy relationships and understand how to keep themselves safe. Their knowledge of the citizenship curriculum, such as the UK's political system and personal finances, is less secure.

Pupils are taught effectively about protected characteristics. This learning has positively altered some of the language they use with their peers. Pupils are also aware of the fundamental British Values. For example, pupils are rightly proud of the inclusive culture in their school and are keen to celebrate each other's differences. This includes respecting and welcoming pupils of different cultures and religious beliefs within their Catholic school

community. Prejudicial language, including racism, sexism and homophobia, is extremely rare and is not tolerated by pupils or staff.

Leaders ensure that the careers support in Years 10 and 11 is effective. This provision is less secure in key stage 3. Staff provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to learn about different options beyond school.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of enriching opportunities that help to develop their confidence and talents. For example, all pupils participate in the annual musical 'Promenade' performance. Many pupils enjoy the clubs on offer, which include martial arts, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the gardening club. Leaders remove any participation barriers for the most vulnerable pupils effectively.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils are rightly proud of the excellent inclusive culture in their school. They are very grateful for the care and encouragement they receive from staff. Many pupils experience significant barriers to their wellbeing or learning. Pupils benefit from highly effective pastoral support, which removes these barriers successfully. They speak passionately about their house community where everyone is known as an individual.

Pupils feel safe because staff ensure that they are safe. They behave well in lessons and during social times. Older pupils are appreciative of how much behaviour has improved over the last few years. Staff support pupils to reflect and improve on their behaviour if they ever make a mistake. Bullying is rare and is not tolerated when it does occur.

Pupils benefit from effective teaching. The majority of pupils enjoy learning and are engaged in their lessons. They are increasingly ambitious in their aspirations for the future. Pupils embrace the school's belief that 'everyone has the right to achieve their full potential'. They generally achieve well. The opportunities they have in school help to develop their confidence and skills. Pupils are now keen to learn even more about citizenship to help them understand the wider world in more detail.

Many pupils attend the school regularly and understand how important this is. They engage enthusiastically with the enrichment opportunities on offer, including becoming a school prefect. Pupils who are selected for this coveted role wear their badges and ties with pride and responsibility. Pupils feel that their voices are heard and are keen to contribute to further improvements in their school.

Pupils are very proud of the school's Catholic ethos. Leaders have created a welcoming community where pupils feel a deep sense of belonging. There is a culture of acceptance in the school. As one pupil said, 'This is a school where you can be whoever you want to be.'

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that all teachers use regular checks on learning to inform the next steps in curriculum delivery.
 - Leaders should evaluate the impact of the personal development curriculum to ensure that pupils have a secure understanding of citizenship.
 - Leaders should continue to embed their attendance strategy to bring about rapid improvements in the attendance of all pupils and a reduction in persistent absence.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Annemarie Whittle, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jane Holmes.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This inspection took place on 9 and 10 September 2026.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

The inspection team spoke with the headteacher and senior leaders. Inspectors met with representatives of the trust and local governing committee boards, including the chair of the trust. The inspection team met with the CEO and Executive Director of Secondary Education, as well as a representative from the Archbishop of Southwark Diocese. Inspectors spoke to staff and pupils and considered the response to stakeholder surveys, including comments from parents.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently uses one alternative provision, which is registered.

The school has a specialist resource provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and speech, language and communication needs.

Headteacher: Grainne Parsons

Lead inspector:

Louise New, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Owen McColgan, Ofsted Inspector

Stephen Cattell, His Majesty's Inspector

Michelle Lawson, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from [different sources](#). More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

 The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 9 September 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

644

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,063

School capacity

600

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

44.88%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 30.4%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

4.19%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.53%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

26.86%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support at the school.

National average: 14.0%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English indices of deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	33.6%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	30.4%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	33.3%	45.3%	Below

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	39.0	46.1	Below
2023/24 (final)	38.1	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	37.2	46.3	Below

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.15	-0.03	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	-0.26	-0.03	Close to average
2021/22 (final)	-0.73	-0.03	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	21.6%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	28.6%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	32.4%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	30.9	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	34.4	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	36.0	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.26	-0.57	Above
2022/23 (final)	-0.29	-0.57	Close to average
2021/22 (final)	-1.04	-0.55	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	21.6%	53.1%	-31.5 pp
2023/24 (final)	28.6%	53.1%	-24.6 pp
2022/23 (final)	32.4%	52.4%	-20.1 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	30.9	50.4	-19.6
2023/24 (final)	34.4	50.0	-15.6
2022/23 (final)	36.0	50.3	-14.3

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.26	0.16	-0.42
2022/23 (final)	-0.29	0.17	-0.45
2021/22 (final)	-1.04	0.15	-1.20

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (revised)	90%	92%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	88%	93%	Below
2021 leavers (revised)	93%	94%	Average

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	9.8%	8.4%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (3 term)	9.4%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	9.3%	9.0%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	29.1%	23.4%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	28.9%	25.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	30.0%	26.5%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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