



- 116584 St Edwards Catholic Secondary School

St Edward's Catholic Secondary School

URN: 116584

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Clifton

12–13 March 2026

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

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

1

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

1

Collective worship (p.7)

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

1

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

N/A

1

Compliance statement

- The school is compliant in relation to the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- The school is compliant in relation to any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.

What the school does well

- The school's Catholic life and mission are lived with exceptional authenticity, driven by the clear vision and inspiration of senior leaders and governors. Their strategic commitment ensures Catholic social teaching is woven through every aspect of school life, recognised nationally through their recent achievement of the Oscar Romero Award – Innovator Level.
- Pupils are not passive recipients but active ambassadors of the school's ethos. Their pride, spiritual curiosity and commitment to justice initiatives and environmental action show how deeply they have internalised the school's mission.
- Pastoral care is exemplary; rooted in the passion, commitment and relational skills of the entire staff team. Staff consistently earn the trust of boys with complex needs, offering unwavering care, love, stability and dignity.
- Religious education is a significant strength, delivered through an adaptive, spiralled curriculum aligned with the *Religious Education Directory* (RED). Lessons consistently embed Catholic social teaching, enabling pupils to connect faith with real-world issues.
- Collective worship is inclusive, routine-driven and rooted in Catholic tradition, thoughtfully adapted for SEMH learners. Students can articulate the ways in which experiences of prayer have shaped how they think about themselves and their place in the world.

What the school needs to improve

- Provide quality training, which develops staff confidence and competence in planning prayer and liturgy so they can deliver a broader range of spiritual and prayerful experiences, reflecting the richness and traditions of the Catholic church.
- Ensure there is a full range of liturgical gestures, music, media and other art forms to enrich prayer experiences.

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

1

Provision

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

1

Leadership

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

1

1



Students demonstrate an exceptional understanding of the school's Catholic life and mission and contribute to it with maturity and pride. A school that recognises every individual as made in the image of God, nurturing their sense of worth, forming boys who demonstrate confidence, compassion and deep respect for themselves and those around them. Moral development is a significant strength; students articulate clear principles of justice, dignity and the common good, and readily connect these to their daily choices. The school's commitment to Catholic social teaching shapes students into confident ambassadors of the mission. They speak with conviction about Pope Francis' Fratelli Tutti, describing it as "the biggest message for us as a community" - a principle which underpins all other school values and shapes how they treat one another and engage with the wider world. Their leadership in the 'Emmaus Water Project' and responses to global crises exemplify a proactive commitment to solidarity, justice and human flourishing. Student-led initiatives, such as the 'Wear it Grey' day, demonstrate deep ownership of faith in action, with students feeling their ideas are genuinely welcomed. Parents affirm that the school "balances high needs with a moral expectation to accept, support and respect others," capturing the strength of this faith-filled community.

Leaders and staff show a deep and genuine commitment to the mission. There is a clear sense of belonging, with Christ at the centre, shaping decisions and daily interactions. This joyful and welcoming community values every member without exception, fostering a culture of support, dignity and celebration. Pastoral care is exemplary; staff offer exceptional, personalised support, particularly for the most vulnerable, modelling the love and compassion central to 'Imago Dei'. Students benefit from tailored provision, including access to specialised therapeutic services. Staff describe their vocation as "walking alongside pupils and their needs" while guiding them to

fulfil their God-given potential, and pupils speak with gratitude about the unconditional dedication shown to them. The school's commitment to *Laudato Si'* and stewardship is inspirational, with environmental responsibility embedded in the life of the community. The Passivhaus, school farm and St Joseph's workshop demonstrate an ambitious and ongoing ecological vision in which pupils feel proud and actively involved. Engagement with Amnesty International, support for the Trussell Trust and the achievement of the Oscar Romero Award (Innovator Level), further reflect a strong commitment to justice and global solidarity. Relationship, sex and health education is thoughtfully designed, fully aligned with diocesan expectations and firmly grounded in Church teaching, representing a model of good practice.

Leaders and governors are determined role models who describe themselves as "guardians" of the Catholic life and mission of the school. Their strategic and ambitious leadership ensures that values, particularly the principles of Catholic social teaching, are woven through the school improvement plan, safeguarding, policies and staff induction, keeping mission central to all decision-making. Initiatives such as the Ignatius Loyola Fund practically strengthen provision for student mental health and wellbeing. Leaders communicate regularly and effectively with parents, who speak warmly of the school, with one noting, "The love and guidance given is Christ-like. The school is a family." Strong links with the local parish are well established, with regular meetings between the parish priest, headteacher and link governor. Leaders provide ongoing formation for staff that supports understanding of ethos and inclusion. The Governing Body has been commended in the Oscar Romero Award Validator's report for its robust promotion and monitoring of Catholic social teaching across school life. Leaders and governors are highly ambitious for the school and inspirational in their commitment to staff wellbeing. Staff describe the school as "transformational" for pupils and feel deeply valued in their work.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

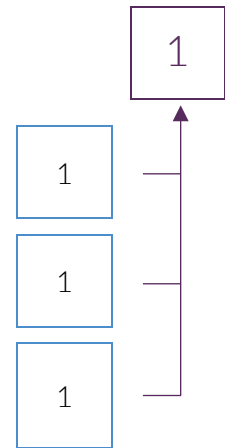
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Students demonstrate high levels of engagement, enjoyment and literacy in religious education. They speak with genuine enthusiasm about their lessons, expressing deep respect for their teachers and recognising the personalised support they receive. Students are attentive and able to recall prior learning, scripture, and key theological concepts with confidence. They contribute thoughtfully to discussion, asking questions rooted in curiosity and prior understanding, and teachers skilfully value and extend these contributions. Students make meaningful links with other world faiths, with one boy reflecting when learning about another tradition “proves how strong their faith is despite how much hardship they face.” The content of the *Religious Education Directory* has been carefully adapted to meet the needs of every learner, ensuring accessibility and challenge. Lessons that embed Catholic social teaching, prayer and connections to world events foster deeper understanding and help students relate faith to life and global issues. Progress across diverse needs is strong. The quality of work in books and floor books, demonstrate parity with other core subjects. Internal data and outcomes in national qualifications confirm sustained progress despite significant social emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. Students are reflective learners who understand their next steps and value the focused feedback they receive after assessments.

Religious education is exceptionally well provided across the school, characterised by teachers’ strong subject knowledge and a deep commitment to the formation of every student. Teachers and support staff demonstrate enthusiasm for the importance of religious education and hold high expectations for students of all abilities. The curriculum is a faithful expression of the *Religious Education Directory*, thoughtfully adapted to meet diverse needs and student starting points. Relationships between staff and students are consistently positive, with teachers adept at skilful questioning, whilst using students’ own questions to make meaningful links between

belief and lived experience. Inclusive strategies—such as therapeutic approaches, high-quality resources and the ‘Know-Show-Grow’ framework—ensure lessons are accessible, engaging and pupil-centred. Celebration of the boys’ contributions and efforts is frequent, fostering high motivation and pride. Assessment is responsive and inclusive, capturing both verbal and written learning, while constructive feedback to students supports continuous improvement. Lessons embed Catholic social teaching and religious literacy through creative activities, prayer experiences and purposeful links to current world events. A rich variety of resources, including creative, hands-on activities such as modelling the “Body of the Church,” sustains engagement and deepens understanding.

Leaders and governors prioritise religious education and allocate generous resources to ensure its continued development. Religious education is firmly held at the heart of the curriculum, with leaders ensuring full compliance with the *Religious Education Directory* and maintaining parity of expectation with other core subjects. The school’s pupil-centred curriculum clearly promotes self-worth, confidence and genuine enjoyment of learning. The subject leader for religious education, supported by senior leaders, provides expert, visionary leadership. She brings national-level expertise, including advisory work for the *Religious Education Directory* and national exam board, and has established a thoughtful three-year development plan that identifies both immediate and medium-term priorities. She models professional reflection and leadership growth practices that have the potential to be shared more widely across the staff team. The religious education curriculum is rigorously mapped to the *Religious Education Directory* and has been praised by external assessors, with the school invited to share best practice in the diocese and nationally. Creative activities, varied prayer experiences and real-world connections enrich pupils’ learning. Ongoing mentoring for non-specialists ensures consistency and confidence in delivery. Leaders and governors value robust monitoring and evaluation; governors are well informed, actively involved in learning walks and curriculum oversight, and revisit religious education twice yearly as part of their monitoring cycle, ensuring accurate evaluation and sustained 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

1

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

Leadership

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

1

1

Students feel 'united together' as they engage respectfully and actively in the daily prayer life of the school, The Lord's Prayer offers a shared spiritual anchor, particularly significant in a context with few Catholic students or staff. Boys value moments of silence, describing them as opportunities to be still, reflect and consider key scripture messages from new perspectives. Students speak confidently about the liturgical year, identifying Advent and Lent as times of reconciliation – "a chance to change behaviours." The school's 'Thought for the Day' structure provides a consistent and accessible framework that deepens understanding of prayer and worship. 'Saint of the Month' reflections and scripture-based activities help pupils connect faith with life and support their moral and spiritual development. Students articulate how prayer shapes their self-understanding and sense of purpose, with some requesting additional opportunities for chapel visits or prayer for specific intentions, such as a bereaved former pupil's family. Chapel displays include a school prayer written by students, who describe it as "more sincere and powerful because it's written for all of us." Students value taking leadership roles in worship and mission activities and express a desire for even more opportunities.

The rhythm of the school day is shaped by regular opportunities for prayer; inclusive and thoughtfully adapted, which make a significant contribution to the spiritual development of the whole community. Daily lunchtime grace, reflection time in lessons, 'Thought for the Day' and the weekly celebration assembly provide a spiritual structure, while additional services—such as the blessing of the school's farm animals and the blessing of the St Joseph's Skills Centre—reflect the breadth of the Church's tradition. Further exploration of prayer, including the rosary and Lectio Divina, is evidenced within religious education lessons, and students speak enthusiastically about their pilgrimage experience during the Year of Jubilee. The school adopts an invitational approach to prayer, encouraging pupils to write personal intentions for prayer

trees, jars and Christmas decorations. Worship spaces such as the chapel and Marian Hall, alongside creative initiatives like the 'Door of Hope' and 'Tree of Pledges' offer meaningful opportunities for encounter. Interfaith displays, the Lampedusa Cross and environmental projects connect worship to Catholic social teaching. Strong parish links, including regular visits from the priest deepen pupils' understanding of the Eucharist. Senior leaders model excellent practice, and parents value opportunities to participate in the school's prayer life; expressing a desire to be more involved.

Leaders have an in-depth understanding of the liturgical year and plan worship that is inclusive, reverent and mission-focused, ensuring it reflects Catholic tradition while meeting the needs of SEMH learners. They are ambitious for the school's spiritual life and are exploring ways to further embed Catholic traditions, including developing stations of the cross within the Pope Francis garden. A clear progression document enables students to grow in confidence and responsibility as they move through the school, with its positive impact evident in discussion with the boys. Staff value the high-quality modelling, training and support provided by leaders, which strengthens their confidence in planning and leading collective worship. New staff are effectively inducted into the prayer life of the school, with many contributing to 'Thought for the Day'. Leaders also create opportunities for staff to explore their own spiritual formation through weekly prayer meetings. Leaders and governors demonstrate deep commitment to prayer and liturgy, ensuring they are well resourced and of consistently high quality. Monitoring systems are robust and used effectively to secure accurate evaluation and continuous improvement. Governors are actively involved in this process, offering strong support and challenge to ensure worship remains central to the school's mission and daily life.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Edward's School
School unique reference number (URN)	116584
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8506032
Full postal address of the school	Melchet Court, Sherfield English, Romsey, Hampshire, SO51 6ZR
School phone number	01794885252
Headteacher	Graham Maher
Chair of governors	Michael Tennant
School Website	www.melchetcourt.com
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Independent Special School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	9-18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Date of last denominational inspection	October 2010
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Rita E. McLoughlin

David Purcell

Lead

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