

# St Edward's School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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## **Purpose and scope of the inspection**

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.<sup>1,2</sup>

## **Information about the school**

St Edwards is a day and residential special school that provides care and education for boys aged between 10 and 16 plus who experience learning difficulties associated with behavioural, emotional and social problems. A maximum of 77 pupils can be accommodated in three residential units at any one time.

The school is a non-profit making charitable trust and is managed on behalf of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Clifton. It is located in a large country house with extensive grounds, workshops, and a horticultural area and provides a range of sport and leisure opportunities. The school has a governing body that meets regularly and plays an active part in the school's operation. Pupils attend the school during term time only and the school is regularly closed at weekends. Boarding is weekly with the flexibility of an extended day for some pupils to meet their individual needs. Pupils are referred to the school from a variety of placing authorities across the country.

The previous inspection of the school's residential provision took place in May 2011.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools).

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>outstanding</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	outstanding
Residential pupils' safety	outstanding
Leadership and management of the residential provision	outstanding

## Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of St Edwards School is outstanding.
- Leadership and management of the school is outstanding and is highly instrumental in maintaining a positive culture within which outcomes for residential pupils are exceptional. Staffing is a real strength of the school with a highly committed, very experienced, and well qualified staff team working collaboratively for the benefit of pupils. Both pupils and staff identify very strongly with the school and are clearly very proud of what they are achieving. There is a sense of community that runs throughout the school with day pupils very much integrated and feeling a part of this.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy the residential experience at the school. They feel safe and well supported there and have remarkably positive and mutually respectful relationships with the staff looking after them. Behaviour is exemplary with pupils routinely helping and developing meaningful relationships with each other. Bullying is not a significant problem for pupils with staff dealing very effectively with any incidents that do occur. The welfare of pupils is of paramount importance across the school and there are excellent safeguarding arrangements for ensuring pupils are protected from harm at all times.
- The school's residential provision impacts extremely positively on the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of pupils. Collaborative planning successfully supports the delivery of high quality and individual care plans which enable pupils to achieve really positive outcomes in areas of their lives. 'Life changing' was how some pupils described the experience of being at the school. A range of specialist therapeutic services available on site provide outstanding support for individual pupils as well as giving highly valued support to staff in the

work that they do.

- Pupils, parents and placing authorities all have a very high regard for the service the school provides. A placing officer from one local authority commented, 'This is my number one school for this type of provision.' Parental comments include, 'Our son has excelled both socially and academically since being at the school,' 'Great to see a happy and contented young man,' 'Amazing school', and 'Our son now has a bright future ahead of him.' 'Thank you to all staff, the school has helped me so much with my GCSE's' were comments in a letter from a recent leaver who stated he was starting college shortly and would be working hard.
- The school demonstrates a clear and continuing commitment to improving the service it provides for its pupils. All national minimum standards are being met and recommendations from the previous report have been satisfactorily addressed. Pupils feel they have a 'voice' within the school and the school routinely seeks the views of parents on a regular basis. The governing body play a very active part in the school's operation and there is excellent monitoring, rigorous self-evaluation and an ongoing development plan. The continuing development of the additional specialist services is one example of continuing improvement. There are excellent relationships with the wider community which benefit pupils tremendously. 'Rainbow' days held each year see pupils supporting young people with profound disabilities to have a fun day at the school. Pupils also help raise money for an ongoing project which supports a school in Uganda.

## **Outcomes for residential pupils**

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. They make considerable progress in regard to their educational, social and emotional development. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the residential experience and identify very strongly with the school. They acquire a wide range of knowledge and skills through a stimulating academic and social development curriculum. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their lives at school and all felt they were making significant progress. A number stated that the school had 'totally changed their lives'. Young people's school attendance is excellent and the monitoring and reviewing process demonstrates the significant progress they are making.

The school's ethos with its emphasis on respect permeates all social relations. Pupils develop trusting and meaningful relationships with both staff and fellow pupils within an atmosphere where interactions are spontaneous and warm. Pupils and staff address each other by their first names and greet each other with pleasantries and handshakes. Pupils receive excellent individual support and guidance from a range of staff including dedicated key-workers who monitor their progress. Pupils meet with their key-workers on a regular basis and discuss all aspects of their lives within school including how their specific care needs are being met. Pupils spoke extremely positively about their relationships with staff and felt they were receiving really good care.

Pupils are encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles and are made aware of the importance of eating wisely and taking regular exercise. Excellent advice and guidance on health related issues is delivered to all pupils via an established personal, social and health education programme and with individual sessions on alcohol misuse and drugs being provided by specialist staff. Pupils who arrive with a smoking habit are actively encouraged to give up by participating in a smoking cessation programme.

Many of the pupils at the school experience difficulties in controlling their emotions and this can manifest itself in disruptive and challenging behaviours. The school has developed an excellent resource staffed by experienced therapeutic practitioners to address the underlying causes of such behaviours. By participating in a range of activities staff help pupils examine their feelings and develop coping strategies to deal with stressful situations. Accessing the service has to be a positive choice for pupils and responses were overwhelmingly positive about how it had helped them better manage their behaviours. One young person said that he was now much better at controlling his anger and that the actions of others, that would previously have sent him 'ballistic', no longer produced an aggressive response.

As part of their development pupils are encouraged to think about others, especially those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils host regular activity days for groups of young people with physical disabilities from a local school and raise money for a school they support in Uganda. Pupils felt such activities were important and made them aware of the needs of others. Pupils participate in a varied and exciting activities programme that includes, camping, climbing, motor cycling, mountain biking, fishing, surfing and canoeing. The experiential programme provides opportunities for pupils to acquire new skills, develop self-confidence and self-discipline while having fun. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the expeditions and activities they had completed and the interests and hobbies they had developed since arriving at the school. Pupils' achievements are acknowledged and shared with the rest of the school community, their parents and placing authorities.

A well-established rewards system provides an incentive structure through which pupils can track their progress both academically and socially. Success is rewarded with opportunities to undertake activities and trips outside of school. Recent trips have included a canoe expedition down the river Wye, a water activities holiday in Devon and a snowboarding holiday in France. Staff work closely with pupils, parents and placing authorities to ensure future placements are appropriate and that transitions are as smooth as possible. There are positive links with local colleges and the school continues to develop post-16 provision for pupils. While at school pupils are provided with opportunities to develop a range of independent living skills.

## Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of the boarding provision and care is outstanding. The school has developed an extremely effective integrated approach to addressing the educational and care needs of pupils. Teaching and care staff liaise very closely with information on each pupils' progress being collated on a shared computer programme. This holistic approach helps ensure that decisions are based on information gathered from staff in a range of different social situations. Comprehensive care planning supports the delivery of high quality personalised care which is highly effective in meeting the wide range of needs displayed by pupils. Established systems provide for exceptionally close monitoring and the regular review of individual pupils and the progress they are making. Pupils are fully involved in the care planning process and all participate in their regular reviews. Reviews are extremely innovative with the educational and social accomplishments of each pupil being presented in a variety of forms including photographs, videos and written work.

Pupils enjoy remarkably positive and constructive relationships with staff. They greatly value and appreciate the support and assistance they receive from both teaching and care staff. Pupils are encouraged to exercise choice over many aspects of their lives and their views and opinions are regularly sought. An elected school council represents the views of students and influence matters affecting them. The school council is a meaningful body with access to financial resources, and has since the last inspection chosen to donate a significant sum of money to a charity of their choosing.

The residential accommodation provides a safe, comfortable and relaxing environment for pupils which is very well maintained. Pupils personalise their rooms with posters and photographs and have suitable provision for keeping personal possessions safe. Toilet and shower facilities provide appropriate privacy and all accommodation was observed to be clean, tidy and in very good decorative order. There is excellent access to school facilities outside of the school day for residential pupils.

The school provides pupils with a stimulating and nurturing environment that is conducive to their personal development. Their health is carefully monitored and there is excellent access to the services and support they need to meet their physical, emotional and psychological needs. High levels of support and guidance successfully help pupils address the personal, social and emotional difficulties that have inhibited their ability to learn effectively and to be able to maintain meaningful social relationships. Pupils enjoy very good quality food that is both appetising and nutritionally balanced. Plenty of food is available, special dietary needs are well met and there are regular opportunities to enjoy foods from other countries around the world. A remarkably extensive activity programme provides opportunities for pupils to develop new interests and skills, achieve success, and be able to do something they enjoy doing. An additional benefit is that regular engagement in activities helps to ensure pupils remain fit and physically active. Pupils report that their levels of

fitness have improved since being at the school and they greatly appreciate being able to access the schools excellent facilities. These include two large sports halls, a swimming pool, a well-equipped gym, and a motocross track.

## **Residential pupils' safety**

The school's provision for ensuring the safety of residential pupils is outstanding. Pupils feel safe and say that although some instances of bullying do occur they are taken very seriously and dealt with effectively by staff. Exceptional relationships with staff and regular visits by an independent listener mean that pupils always have a range of adults to talk to should they feel unsafe. 'All of the staff are brilliant at the anti-bullying policy, and they look after us brilliantly' was one comment received by a residential pupil prior to the inspection. Robust procedures for the recruitment of staff are being effectively implemented and ensure that only suitable people have contact with residential pupils.

The school is highly successful with pupils in promoting positive behaviour and supporting them to develop strategies for managing conflict. Staff are acutely aware of safe working practice and were seen to be proactive in managing potentially difficult situations in a sensitive and supportive manner. Residential pupils confirmed that physical restraint is only ever used when absolutely necessary and detailed records of incidents fully supported this view. There is extremely close monitoring of individual pupils in relation to their behaviour and comprehensive risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated as necessary. The school has an excellent relationship with the local police and instances of residential pupils being absent without authority are extremely rare.

The school premises provide a very safe and secure environment for residential pupils. Closed circuit television monitors the exterior of the buildings and there are established safe systems for receiving and monitoring visitors. Staff are acutely aware of their responsibility to ensure a safe environment is provided and maintained for pupils and in addition the school uses an external specialist company to carry out regular health and safety audits. Pupils are very aware of what to do in the event of a fire and report that evacuation practices are held regularly. The school is not risk averse and makes exceptional provision for managing the risks associated with the extensive range of activities that pupils enjoy. Examples of these include motorcycling, fishing, adventure camps, and an overseas snowboarding trip. This area is a real strength of the school and one which benefits pupils greatly.

Safeguarding the welfare of pupils is a central and integrated aspect of how the school operates. There are established links with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and the school works very closely with all placing authorities. All staff receive annual child protection training from the local authority safeguarding unit and have a very clear understanding of their responsibility to protect pupils from harm at



all times. Senior staff with responsibility for child protection across the school have received training specific to the role and there have been no child protection concerns relating to the school since the previous inspection. The school has a clearly open and transparent culture within which safe working practices are successfully implemented and where pupils feel totally safe.

## **Leadership and management of the residential provision**

Leadership and management of the school is outstanding. Excellent information is provided for pupils, parents, and placing authorities and the school's stated aims and objectives are clearly being met. The school's head and senior management team have extensive experience, are extremely well qualified, and operate the school very effectively and efficiently. Both day and residential pupils identify really strongly with the school, however the residential provision is clearly central to the school's operation. Boys thoroughly enjoy the residential experience and it has a marked and positive effect on their personal, social, and educational development. Well established routines ensure the school runs smoothly on a day to day basis, providing clear and consistent boundaries that benefit pupils and the work being carried out with them. There is a clear commitment to continuing improvement for the benefit of pupils, with the ongoing development of additional specialist services on site being an example of this. Pupils feel able to influence matters within the school and a long established school council operates extremely effectively.

Staffing is a real strength of the school. The care staff are a very established and experienced group who provide an exceptional degree of consistency of care for pupils and who work remarkably well as a team. They are very enthusiastic about the work they do and are skilled in promoting and achieving positive outcomes for residential pupils. Close working and collaborative planning with educational staff ensure an integrated and consistent approach benefits pupils and is facilitated by excellent communication across the school. High staffing levels ensure that pupils are adequately supervised at all times, but are not overly intrusive. Excellent support is provided for staff in the form of regular supervision and a proactive and high quality training programme which enables them to successfully meet the changing needs of pupils being placed at the school. Communication with parents is excellent and includes them being contacted at the beginning and end of every school week, helping to keep both parties informed of events at home and at school. Placing authorities are extremely positive about the school with one placing officer commenting, 'It's my number one school for this type of provision.'

The governing body of the school contribute to the highly effective monitoring of the school's overall operation, and the welfare of individual pupils. Monthly visits are carried out unannounced with the responsibility being rotated amongst members and detailed written reports provided to the head of the school. Monthly meetings of governors include comprehensive written representations from the head and deputy head of the school. Rigorous self-evaluation takes place annually and is used to inform the school's ongoing improvement plan. The school has an excellent record of

addressing recommendations from previous inspections and continues to sustain outstanding practice. Up to date policies and procedures support and promote good practice across the school while staffing arrangements are highly instrumental in the success achieved by pupils.

## **National minimum standards**

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

## **What should the school do to improve further?**

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



11/07/2012

Dear boys,

### **Inspection of St Edward's School**

First of all I would like to say how much we enjoyed our visit and to thank you all for making us feel so welcome. We were delighted to see what a difference St Edwards is making to your lives and to find that you have really positive relationships with each other and with the staff looking after you. Staff do everything they can to make sure you are as safe as possible at all times and it was good to hear you say that you feel safe, and that you have a voice within the school. Clearly some incidents of bullying do take place but the school deals with them very effectively. You are to be congratulated on your behaviour during the inspection, and for being so helpful, it was much appreciated. We found that staff give you fantastic support in all areas of your lives and that you have real success in changing and learning how to manage your behaviour. We were impressed at seeing how you help each other, and also how you help others during the school's 'Rainbow Days' and by the support you give to the 'Kisoboka Trust' in Uganda. The facilities at St Edwards are excellent and we were amazed by the range of activities you have available to you. Staff have lots of training to make sure they are able to look after you properly and it was really good to see the mutual respect there is between you. We concluded that your school is exceedingly good at helping you to achieve positive outcomes in your lives. We hope you all continue to benefit from your time at the school and we wish you all the very best for the future.

Brian and David.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Mcquoid / David Coulter