

St Edward's School

Melchet Court, Sherfield English, Romsey, Hampshire SO51 6ZR

Inspection dates

5–7 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders sustain a highly inclusive ethos in the school. Pupils thrive because their social and emotional needs are met very well. This enables them to engage confidently with their academic learning.
- Leaders know their school. They recognise that pupils' learning needs are different now than in the past. Their work to develop academic provision that responds to these changing needs is rightly ongoing.
- Governors support the school diligently, using their experience and expertise wisely. They keep a careful eye on standards of behaviour and staff welfare in the school. Their focus on academic standards is less well developed.
- In lessons, pupils concentrate and engage with their work. Teachers have established a learning environment where pupils feel safe to be challenged beyond their comfort zones. As a result, pupils typically make good progress.
- Pupils achieve well throughout their time at the school, often from low starting points. They gain relevant qualifications that equip them well for the future. All pupils move on to suitable post-16 study at local colleges.
- Safeguarding is effective. Staff are collectively committed to supporting pupils and providing effectively for their needs. Consequently, pupils feel safe and extremely well cared for.
- Pupils attend school very regularly. Leaders' careful and rigorous routines ensure that any barriers to attendance are minimised. No pupils are persistently absent from school.
- Pupils' behaviour is typically excellent, in lessons, and around the school. Pupils are courteous and respectful to the adults that care for them. They are highly accepting of each other's differences.
- Leaders use a wealth of additional support to cater for pupils' wider needs. Pupils benefit from a range of therapies, such as art, and speech and language. Leaders' oversight of the collective impact or direction of this work is currently not as fully developed as it could be.
- The very small number of students who remain at the school for their sixth-form studies are supported extremely well. Leaders ensure that the courses students follow meet their learning needs. As a result, students make very good progress and are suitably prepared for their next steps.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further accelerate pupils' rates of academic progress by:
 - supporting teachers in adapting and developing the strategies they use to meet pupils' changing learning needs
 - sharing teaching expertise more systematically to develop rigour and challenge
 - refining how the wealth of information available about pupils is shared and used by leaders, so that additional help is targeted and coordinated more precisely.
- Strengthen governors' rigour and challenge around educational outcomes, by using recently introduced performance management processes to hold staff and leaders more closely to account for the difference their work makes to pupils' academic achievements.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the last inspection, leaders have retained their absolute determination to provide an environment in which pupils can flourish. Supported by their clearly established caring ethos, leaders unite all staff in doing their very best for the pupils in their care. The impact of their actions is evident in the way pupils re-engage with their learning when they join the school, and in the respectful relationships that are evident throughout.
- Leaders identify the school's many strengths accurately. They ensure that the independent school standards are met, and recognise how the school is evolving to meeting the changing needs of the pupils it serves. They know the aspects that need to be developed further in order for pupils to make even more rapid academic progress throughout their time at the school.
- Staff are very proud to work at the school. They know the pupils very well and develop highly effective relationships that help them to be successful. Staff feel well supported by the training they receive, particularly in relation to pupils' specific needs. Those members of staff spoken to during the inspection were less clear about how training helps them to further improve the quality of teaching across the school.
- Parents and carers are almost unanimously positive about the difference the school makes to their children. They recognise the staff's knowledgeable and professional approach, the excellent care their children receive, and the impact it has on pupils' emotional health and well-being. One parent summed this up when they described being, 'extremely grateful for everything that St Edward's has done for my son and my family, and for the opportunities they have given him'.
- Leaders and governors have reviewed the way staff are held to account for the difference their work makes to pupils. A newly introduced process for this academic year ensures that staff work is more closely linked to whole-school priorities for improvement. It is too early in the cycle to determine the difference this is making to standards in the school.
- Leaders make regular checks on standards in the school, via monitoring activities, peer review by other schools, and attendance at external events such as an annual conference. Staff recognise that these activities are useful, but do not readily identify how they help to direct future training or improve the quality of teaching in their classroom. On occasion, feedback from monitoring activities is overly focused on pupils' engagement rather than their actual learning.
- The strong and consistent values established across the school are critical in enabling pupils to engage effectively with their learning. Pupils demonstrate respect and tolerance, and are accepting of others who are different to them. They proudly describe the sense of 'family' that permeates the school.
- Pupils access learning across a suitably broad range of academic subjects. Leaders make sensible decisions that balance the academic curriculum carefully against different pupils' specific additional needs. A very small number of students remain in the school in Year 12. They benefit greatly from a curriculum offer that meets their specific and individual learning needs, supported effectively by alternative provision from a local college where appropriate.

- Pupils' classroom experience is suitably enriched by regular opportunities for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Staff seize opportunities for pupils to participate in activities and events that emphasise the importance of contributing to the world around them, such as via fund-raising, or hosting a 'rainbow day' for pupils who have disabilities from several other special schools. Pupils talk proudly about how this helps them to develop their confidence, for example by talking in front of an audience.

Governance

- Governors bring suitable experience and understanding to their role. They are committed to ensuring that pupils continue to benefit highly from attending the school. They are rightly proud of the difference the school's work makes to pupils' welfare and engagement with learning.
- The governing body understands its responsibilities appropriately. Governors visit the school regularly to check what leaders tell them about standards in the school. They use their regular meetings to challenge leaders about the information they receive about pupils' behaviour and staff welfare. Their focus on academic standards appears to be less well developed.
- Governors have the opportunity to access relevant training and research to support them in fulfilling their duties effectively. However, systems to audit governors' collective skills and prioritise training are not clearly established. Consequently, they are not as well informed as they could be, especially in relation to challenging leaders about pupils' attainment and progress.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors keep safeguarding at the top of their agenda. They recognise how potentially vulnerable pupils are, and give this aspect of their work absolute priority. Their determination is reflected by all the adults working in the school.
- Leaders ensure that the school's safeguarding policy is fit for purpose and shared with all the school's stakeholders via the website. All adults connected with the school receive regular training relevant to their role. As a result, they are confident in identifying any signs of possible concern about a child and ensuring that they are addressed promptly.
- Pupils are confident to speak to adults in the school about any worries they have. The role of the independent listener helpfully provides them with an additional advocate for ensuring that any concerns they have are heard. They understand that adults sometimes need to share what pupils tell them in order to act in pupils' best interests.
- Leaders work closely with experts from beyond the school to help pupils whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable. They keep careful records of the actions they take, and liaise closely with parents and carers where possible. They engage appropriately with experts from beyond the school to help tackle particular concerns when they arise.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils make good progress over time because learning in class engages them. They typically behave very well in lessons, demonstrating courtesy and respect. They understand that adults strive to help them do their best, and value the extra support that builds their confidence and makes learning more accessible.
- Teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils well. They understand the importance of meeting pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs effectively, so that they are able to access their academic learning. Teachers structure work carefully so that all pupils have the opportunity to be successful and improve their self-belief as well as their knowledge and skills. This helps to obtain and retain pupils' motivation.
- Where teaching is most effective, pupils are challenged to take risks and extend beyond their comfort zones. High-quality discussion and questioning encourage pupils to think, reason and apply their learning to familiar contexts. Pupils understand how to move their learning on, because of the clear and useful feedback, in line with the school's policy, that they receive about their work.
- Students in the sixth form benefit from a highly personalised approach that meets their needs closely, including via alternative provision at a local sixth-form college. Learning mentors monitor students' progress closely, and provide a regular and useful source of practical and emotional support. As a result, students persevere with their learning and make good progress over time.
- Leaders recognise the challenges that many of their pupils face in their learning, due to their very low levels of literacy on arrival at the school. A consistent approach to encouraging regular reading, and monitoring pupils' levels of engagement, is helping to improve pupils' reading skills. Pupils enjoy participating in the school's reading scheme, and are motivated to improve their word scores.
- Pupils who have a particularly high level of need benefit from useful additional support in the 'garden rooms' classes. Specific speech and language or literacy programmes complement pupils' wider learning in lessons. Pupils recognise how adults' patience and this carefully structured support help them to develop their reading, writing and speaking skills more rapidly than had previously been the case. As a result, they can learn more successfully in other subjects than they could in the past.
- As well as specific learning support, pupils' academic engagement is supported via a useful range of additional therapies, such as anger management and psychotherapy using the arts. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and therapeutic services team liaise regularly to keep each other updated about the range of support each pupil is receiving. Leaders recognise that these equally important aspects of the school's work could be planned and coordinated even more carefully, to maximise their impact on pupils' academic outcomes.
- Where teaching is less effective, pupils are not challenged sufficiently to move on or deepen their learning. The structure of tasks sometimes restricts pupils' opportunities to develop their own independence, and instructions can be confusing rather than enabling. While feedback rightly encourages and recognises pupils' efforts, it does not always give pupils a clear understanding of how to improve their work.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Consequently, pupils feel very safe and very well cared for amid what they accurately describe to be the 'family atmosphere' within the school. One pupil captured this when he said, 'I feel like I belong at St Edward's.'
- Pupils undoubtedly thrive socially and emotionally, because adults understand and meet their needs very successfully. Pupils benefit from a very wide range of therapeutic work that accurately identifies and addresses barriers to their educational progress, linked to their mental health as well as their learning needs. This is vital to the success pupils achieve academically.
- Leaders integrate opportunities for pupils to develop their emotional resilience into the daily life of the school. Adults encourage pupils to reflect on their actions and make positive choices about their behaviour, which the pupils typically do well. Teachers anticipate changes of routine that pupils may find unsettling, and manage them sensitively, so that learning is not disrupted.
- Staff help pupils link what they learn in school to real-life contexts that are relevant to them. For example, during the inspection, student councillors were learning about proportional representation and applying this to ensure that the council represented pupils' views fairly. This helps pupils to understand their place in the world and how they can contribute successfully, giving them a sense of self-worth.
- Students in the sixth form complete work experience around the school, which leads them to engage successfully in other relevant work or training in the local community. When attending alternative provision, staff provide highly effective support that enables students to manage the transition into college successfully.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils respond extremely well to adults' high expectations for their conduct. They are typically courteous, both to each other and to the adults around them. Through their actions, pupils demonstrate a real sense of commitment to upholding the school's clear values and maintaining the respectful atmosphere around the school.
- During the inspection, instances of misbehaviour in lessons and around the school were very rare. On the limited occasions that pupils' standards of behaviour slipped slightly, they were managed effectively through consistent routines that were well understood. Adults take every opportunity to recognise and celebrate pupils' very positive choices about their own behaviour.
- Pupils, and students in the sixth form, attend school very regularly, despite many living a considerable distance from the school. No pupils are persistently absent. Leaders make prompt and effective contact with parents and carers to address issues that risk affecting pupils' excellent attendance rates, including transport difficulties.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils join the school with levels of attainment that are typically well below those expected for their age. Often, they have been disengaged from formal learning for quite some time before they come to St Edward's. As a result of the support and care they receive, pupils make good academic progress over time, across a range of subjects that is appropriate to their needs.
- Pupils' rates of progress accelerate over time. Those who are placed at the school for a longer period experience greater academic achievement, because previous barriers to learning are tackled successfully. Some who arrive at the school during the latter part of key stage 4 make less rapid progress from their starting points.
- By the end of Year 11, all pupils achieve qualifications that enable them to access future learning successfully. Every pupil completing key stage 4 over the past three years secured a college place, and the vast majority sustained this placement to the end of their course. This is because of how well staff support pupils to make appropriate choices about their future study and manage the transition from school to college.
- Post-16 students typically achieve well, gaining qualifications that lead them successfully on to further study or training. They improve on their key stage 4 qualifications in English and mathematics, and develop useful knowledge, skills and understanding that equip them well for the workplace.
- In 2017, pupils' progress across key stage 4 was less rapid than for previous cohorts. This partly reflects the changing academic needs of pupils in the school, which leaders are working to provide for. However, progress information also indicates that some pupils are not catching up as quickly as they need to with other pupils nationally. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 11 is typically below that of other pupils nationally.
- Leaders' clear focus on improving literacy is enabling some pupils to make rapid gains in their reading and spelling ages. As a result, some pupils can now access the curriculum whereas they could not in the past. Other pupils make more gradual progress, meaning that they do not routinely catch up with others nationally who have the same starting points.

School details

Unique reference number	116584
DfE registration number	850/6032
Inspection number	10044143

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	9 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	48
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	St Edward's Roman Catholic charitable incorporated organisation (CIO)
Chair	Mr M Tennant
Headteacher	Mr L Bartel
Annual fees (day pupils)	£78,672
Telephone number	01794 885 252
Website	www.melchetcourt.com
Email address	enquiries@melchetcourt.com
Date of previous inspection	10–12 March 2015

Information about this school

- St Edward's is an independent special school for boys aged nine to 18. It has been open since 1980, and is based in a Grade 2 listed building on a rural site in Hampshire. It has a distinct Catholic ethos and is affiliated to the Clifton Diocese. As a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO), it has a board of governors that assumes overall responsibility for the school.
- Pupils all have an education, health and care plan based on their social, emotional and mental health needs. An increasing proportion of pupils arrive at the school with additional and more complex needs, such as very low literacy levels and/or specific

speech and language difficulties. A notable proportion of pupils have had a period of time away from formal education before joining the school.

- All of the pupils are referred by a relevant local authority, which funds their place at the school. There are currently pupils from 10 different local authorities who attend the school. Most travel to school daily, but a small proportion are accommodated in a boarding provision on the school site, which is registered and inspected separately.
- The school uses Sparsholt College as an alternative provider to support the range of courses offered to the very small number of pupils who stay on at the school in the sixth form.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited 10 lessons across a range of year groups and subjects, observing learning and looking at pupils' work. These visits were carried out alongside school leaders. The inspector also spoke to Year 12 students and looked at a sample of their work.
- The inspector also visited a staff briefing, 'thought for the day' and three assemblies. She went to the library to meet the librarian and observe reading time at the start of the day. She visited the dining halls and games room at lunchtime, and observed pupils arriving and leaving at the start and end of each day. She conducted a tour of the site with the headteacher to check compliance with the premises aspect of the independent school standards.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, a range of other staff, and with a group of pupils. She met with two representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors. She also spoke to a representative from Sparsholt College, where one student attends to complete his Year 12 studies.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of information about the school's performance, including policies and documents, both on the website and provided by school leaders. She also looked at information about pupils' attendance, behaviour and achievement.
- The inspector took into account 12 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 12 free-text comments. She also considered 42 responses from the staff survey.

Inspection team

Kathryn Moles, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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