

# St Edward's School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Gavin Thomas
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<b>Setting address</b>	St. Edwards School, Melchet Court, Sherfield English, ROMSEY, Hampshire, SO51 6ZR
<b>Telephone number</b>	01794 885252
<b>Email</b>	lbartel@melchetcourt.com
<b>Registered person</b>	St Edward's School
<b>Head/ Principal</b>	Lawrence Bartel
<b>Nominated person</b>	Lawrence Bartel
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	02/02/2010

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## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality  
Good: this aspect of the provision is strong  
Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound  
Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

## Service information

### Brief description of the service

St Edward's 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 46 pupils can be accommodated in three residential units at any one time. At the time of this inspection, 30 pupils were resident and approximately 15 took part in this inspection.

The school is a non-profit making charitable trust and is owned and managed by 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.

### Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

This was an announced full inspection. All of the key national minimum standards for residential special schools under the Every Child Matters outcomes and organisation were assessed.

The vast majority of surveys received from parents and pupils rated their satisfaction with the school as being high or very high. Action is being taken by the senior management team to speak with a very low percentage of pupils who chose to comment on their individual experiences.

The majority of pupils arrive at St Edwards with a mixture of emotions and often complex needs. They leave as young men who have worked through their emotions and ready to take on new challenges. This success is celebrated by pupils and the entire staff team who are committed to the pupils' education, care and welfare in a busy but calm environment. Pupils are not shy or fearful of speaking about how they feel or anything which is troubling them. Staff create an atmosphere where this is encouraged and respected. One visiting professional summarises the 'thought of the day' session as a means of 'setting the tone' and an opportunity for reflection. The opportunities for former pupils returning to the school and the levels of contact maintained with former pupils are an inspiration for current pupils.

Staff and pupils are guided and supported by a senior management team and governing body who are visible and dynamic in their approach towards improvement and development. A visiting professional also describes the staff team as being 'solid'

and a team which is highly trained and provides a 'safe' school for the pupils.

Observations and interactions throughout the inspection signified the value placed on forming trusting relationships between staff and pupils. Pastoral care is exercised in a number of ways. This is consistent at all times of the day, including ways in which staff interact and intervene with pupils across each of the remits. There is also a great emphasis placed on celebrating pupils' achievements no matter how small. Pupils are encouraged by this, which is also an incentive for them to further challenge their abilities.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

No recommendations were made at the previous inspection.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Health services accessible to pupils are wide ranging, taking into account pupils holistic needs. Medical services provided by external professionals are prompt with additional support given to school staff on matters such as policy making. Pupils access the services of a local General Practitioner's surgery with the support from school staff. Alternate health remedies and services provided by the school are central to pupils emotional and mental well-being. A dedicated team of suitably trained professionals work closely with all staff to ensure that support interventions with pupils are consistent and effective. This therapeutic ethos is evolving and pupils are now benefitting from an art therapy suite with plans to further develop this resource. Statistics clearly show that in-house alternate health provisions are becoming increasingly popular with pupils. Staff are trained to high standards for ensuring that they are kept abreast of health related procedures such as using the epi pen, counselling skills and carrying out first aid procedures.

The management of medication procedures and the recording of pupils health needs are robust with vigorous monitoring processes in place. Staff ensure that medication procedures are followed accurately including the dispensing, administration and countersigning of controlled drugs.

Pupils enjoy a healthy and well-balanced diet which is carefully planned and overseen by the catering team. Meals are varied, plentiful and foods from around the world are planned in consultation with the pupils. The main meal of the day is at lunch times and currently, pupils favourite day is Wednesday which is roast dinner day. The range of meals takes into account pupils preferences and wishes. In order to achieve this, the catering manager visits pupils during residential times on a weekly basis to consult with them about the menus. This ensures that pupils are fully aware of what is being served during the week and their wishes considered, including cultural and religious preferences. Each of the three residential units are equipped with cooking facilities and pupils are encouraged to participate in preparing breakfast and supper meals. The atmosphere in the dining room is lively and

sociable, and well supervised.

Records for catering and menu purposes are comprehensive and kept up to date with vital information. In addition, the school has also gained an award for outstanding performance in relation to food safety standards.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are extremely respectful of pupils privacy and dignity. Practical arrangements for enabling pupils to speak to people in private or making private phone calls are effective. For example, ample space is provided for private conversations and visiting professionals are suitably accommodated. Pupils are aware of school rules relating to privacy and pupils are not concerned about their privacy in communal areas of the school. Pupils trust the staff including visiting professionals. This is because all staff are open and frank with pupils about how information or matters discussed with them are used or shared for their protection.

The percentage of complaints received by the school since the last inspection is very low. The one complaint received was investigated thoroughly and the pupil concerned was involved throughout. Pupils are very aware of the complaints procedure but explain that they are generally happy with ways in which they are supported by staff to prevent situations escalating. The suggestion box is an initiative for pupils to express their views or concerns without disclosing their personal details. The written complaints procedure is accessible via different routes. However, not all versions of the complaints procedure include the correct contact details for the current regulator - Ofsted.

Safeguarding and protection are integral to all aspects of school life. Staff are kept abreast of best practice through training, forums and ongoing discussions about safeguarding. Staff report that that the types of training they receive are relevant and compatible with the school's ethos and principles for creating a safe environment for pupils. The emphasis placed on individual pupil's safety and well-being is a key strength of the admissions process through to transitional planning for pupil's moving on. The support of visiting professionals, relationships with external agencies and in-house systems are examples of exemplary practice for promoting pupils safety and protection at all times. Staff are proactive in responding to safeguarding matters and all levels of intervention are clearly recorded and monitored.

Pupils are educated and cared for in an environment where respect for each other has a strong presence. Procedural guidance on countering bullying is implemented discreetly but effectively. In doing so, pupils learn about coping and working through their emotions and feelings without hurting or upsetting others. Pupils speak very openly about ways in which they are supervised and supported to prevent bullying situations. The impact of cyber bullying is taken very seriously at the school. As a result, arrangements are in place and known to all pupils regarding the use of the internet and mobile phones during school time.

Robust procedures are in place for responding to incidents when pupils are missing from care including agreed protocols with external agencies. Incidents of this nature are extremely rare and well-managed systems are in place for ensuring that pupils are appropriately supervised at all times.

The effectiveness of behavioural management systems is exceptional. The emphasis placed on recording and reporting on individual pupil's assessed needs, provides very clear and concise leads for negotiating the appropriate supports of intervention. All staff across the school work coherently and efficiently for ensuring that all forms of intervention are relevant and helps pupils to understand the impact of unacceptable behaviours. Staff are very skilled at promoting positive behaviours with the pupils. This is achieved through the valued work relationships staff form with the on-site therapy team and visiting professionals. The outcomes of these working relationships have a positive impact on the young people. The pupils give various examples of why they feel safe at this school. Two main reasons being the types of support they receive to help overcome past issues such as anger and developing positive relationships with others. The tracking of physical interventions is robust. This form of intervention is used as a last resort and pupils are consulted at every stage of the event with an emphasis on restorative approaches.

Extensive work is undertaken for maintaining the upkeep of the premises and safety requirements. Good quality records are kept for demonstrating the types of checks undertaken and work pursued through external contractors who undertake major repair works. Overall fire safety procedures are managed and monitored effectively. This includes the frequency and monitoring of fire drills involving staff and pupils, the servicing of the fire detection systems and fire safety training for all staff. However, wedges are used at peak times of the day for holding open two designated fire doors in two of the residential units.

No new staff have been appointed for the residential service since the last inspection. However, comprehensive recruitment procedures are in place for preventing pupils being exposed to potential abusers. Senior management staff keep abreast of best practice by attending updated training on safer recruitment. In addition, a well-managed programme is in place for ensuring that all staff Criminal Records Bureau checks are refreshed on a three yearly cycle. The vetting of potential applicants is sound and this is demonstrated through the outcome of interviews and other vetting procedures.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

The pupils' education and learning opportunities extend beyond the school day. In addition to core and academic subjects, pupils develop and learn new skills as a result of the school's vocational studies programme. All staff work harmoniously to give pupils the best of opportunities to engage in culture, environment and citizenship activities. These core values are disseminated through a very active

timetable which spans over the day and evening. Visiting professionals, parents and pupils are excited about the learning opportunities available. One pupil said 'I had no interest in school before coming here. Staff have helped me turn that around and now I am ready to move onto a college placement'. Another pupil reflects on his experiences and said 'I can go to any member of staff if I am stuck. That is why I am doing well with my education'. There is an abundance of information, photographs and journals which celebrates the pupils involvement in learning opportunities. Pupils value these opportunities in particular, the extent of work undertaken by staff to support pupils in gaining for further education placements. Staff know how pupils progress after they have left as a result of the lines of communication retained with former pupils.

The varying types of support offered to pupils are focused, individualised and consistent. There is no differentiation in the way in which pupils are supported by teaching, care staff or additional services including visiting professionals. For example, care staff and teaching staff speak about the many benefits of cross-sector working. This also helps to develop relationships with pupils in different environments and not just restricted to different remits of the school. Pupils are kept fully informed of the services available to them including therapeutic services. The option of pupils self referring to any of the support services or requests to see staff is effective in practice. Therapeutic services are evolving and significant for pupils' emotional well-being. A keyworker system is in place and works extremely well for both pupils and others significant to them. For instance, keyworkers are instrumental in communicating with people on behalf of pupils. They also oversee the implementation of pupils care plans exceptionally well.

Pupils are happy with the levels of support they receive including the importance of the school council. Members of the school council are representative of all age groups and the boarding facility. Members feel that their views are taken seriously and that their work makes a difference to outcomes and provisions. In addition to staff, pupils know that they can request to talk to visiting professionals including the independent listener and consultant psychologist. Independent services are accessible and visits to the school by the independent listener are frequent.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils are continuously involved in decision-making processes. They are also supported in an environment where a broad range of diverse needs are met without prejudice or judgement. Dialogue with pupils is encouraged and staff interact with pupils at levels which supports this. For instance, at less formal times of the day, staff and pupils share light-hearted conversations such as meal times. Parents are consulted through surveys and the feedback is used to influence practice and support. The outcomes of the most recent surveys undertaken by the school, indicates a very high level of parental satisfaction.

The procedures for admissions and leaving the school are comprehensive and well



through. The significance placed on transitional work to and from the school also helps pupils overcome their anxieties in forming new relationships. Pupils speak positively about their initial experiences, in particular the buddy system and opportunities for visiting the school before moving in. The work undertaken with individual pupils prior to moving in is extensive. The outcomes of home visits, analysis of written reports and liaison with the pupil and significant others are recorded to exceptional standards. As a result, the profiling of a pupil's needs and how these are met through care planning activities after admission is clear and concise.

Pupils speak highly about the support they receive in preparation for moving on. This is echoed by visiting professionals. Staff work intensely with all involved in preparing pupils for moving on. Some pupils find this process challenging and on rare occasions, pupils' departures from the school do not go to plan. However, a school leaver's portfolio is presented to all school leavers when they move on. This is an accumulation of exam results, portfolio of achievements and pictorial evidence of key activities and participation while at St Edwards. This symbolises a positive closure for all pupils as they prepare to move on.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils enjoy their accommodation and their reasons include: the outdoor space in particular the motor bike track, the large bedrooms, the numbers of bathing and toilet facilities, the living space which gives pupils the opportunity to spend time alone and other facilities such as games consoles. Repairs to the fabric of the premises are ongoing.

The senior house offers a more focused approach to independence. Pupils are introduced to a range of self-help skills, safety awareness and learning core activities such as cooking and being more responsible for their personal possessions.

The grounds of the school are vast with opportunities for pupils to get involved in helping with the upkeep. For example, keeping the lake clean is an activity some pupils volunteer to do. Pupils are appropriately supervised including time spent on outdoor pursuits. There are also precautions in place for preventing unauthorised access of the school property and pupils residential areas.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

Information about the school such as the Statement of Purpose and the mission statement are kept up to date. The Statement of Purpose is also scrutinised and approved by the governing body. The pupils' handbook has been updated since the

last inspection. Pupils are familiar with this document because they made reference to some of the content during conversations. The handbook is also issued to pupils prior to admission. This helps pupils familiarise themselves with details of the school, staff and what they can expect prior to admission. The latest version of the pupils' handbook is more appealing to pupils as it contains photographs and pictures of life at the school. The school's website contains a range of information and guidance on the school's activities, provisions and resources.

The staffing policy works well in practice including arrangements for waking night staff and on-call arrangements. The numbers and deployment of staff take into account the needs and vulnerability of pupils including their safety in vast amounts of outdoor space. Pupils are supported by a very stable and mixed staff team. This includes staff of both genders with an extensive mix of skills and expertise. Pupils know which staff are on duty at all times, and great strides are taken for ensuring consistency and continuity of care. For example, care and teaching staff work extremely well together. This uniformed approach ensures that agreed protocols for supporting pupils are implemented consistently across the school. Where appropriate, this involves the input from the additional services team and visiting professionals.

Management systems in place ensure that staff are appropriately supervised. The frequency and quality of formal supervisions as explained by staff are thorough and meaningful. Staff receive formal supervision at least once every half term. In addition, there are other forms of ongoing dialogue, consultation and coaching opportunities for the staff team. The additional services team is accessible to staff and this is an opportunity for staff to reflect on practise and evaluate their work with each other and the pupils. The different teams of staff are professional in their approach and demonstrate a sound understanding of the needs of the pupils. The day-to-day management structures in places are exceptional. For instance, staff spend proper time in communicating, monitoring, recording and evaluating pupils care and welfare.

All staff are trained to NVQ Level 3 in the Caring for Children and Young People. In addition, staff attend a broad range of other training and development initiatives which are appropriate to their work with the pupils. In-house training is highly valued by staff and this is a prominent feature for all staff on INSET days. The head of care is suitably experienced and qualified to NVQ level 4 in management and leadership.

Key policies and procedures are accessible to parents and staff. The governing body ensures that policies and procedural guidance documents are kept under review. A well-managed system is in place for reviewing these documents and staff are alerted to significant changes. An interactive data base is widely used by all staff for accessing key information.

Effective management systems are in place for monitoring pupils' outcomes and the overall quality of the residential provisions. Where appropriate, these systems overlap with the education provision. In doing so, the management team has a clear overview about individual pupils and their progress. The headteacher produces very

detailed monthly reports to the governing body. This style of reporting combines the outcomes of other monitoring and reporting systems for each the individual residential units. In addition to the monitoring of written records, the senior management team including the governing body undertake ongoing visual checks of the premises and are very observant of practice in each of the school's remits. The pupils are familiar with management's interactions and one pupil refers to the headteacher's open door policy as 'a good thing'.

The governing body is well represented with a broad mix of professional backgrounds and expertise. The governing body takes its role very seriously and undertakes unannounced visits at least every half term. Reports demonstrate the purpose and outcome of each visit including observations made and discussions with staff or pupils. The times of visits vary and this gives governors the opportunity to observe and interact with pupils at different times of the day.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The school has a clear track record for promoting the individual rights, needs and as far as possible, the wishes of each pupil. The value placed on each pupil is exceptional. This is evidenced from the first point of contact through to levels of contact and communication with former pupils. The school's holistic approach to recognising and celebrating diversity is a key strength in each of the remits. For example, although the school is owned by the Roman Catholic faith, pupils and staff are accepted and respected if they follow other faiths, or none. The personal social and health education programme also promotes a positive learning opportunity for pupils in a predominantly male environment. All staff, visiting professionals and significant others such as the governing body are committed to celebrating pupils' achievements. This motivates pupils and encourages them to explore and value their own abilities and competence. The awards ceremony and individual achievement profiles are examples of how pupils are embraced into a culture of 'warmth' and 'respect'. Pupils speak proudly about their involvement in fundraising activities for national and international organisations. They also speak with great enthusiasm about interacting with other groups of young people. One pupil describes this experience as an opportunity for helping young people who are less able to help themselves.

## **What must be done to secure future improvement?**

### **Compliance with national minimum standards**

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- ensure that all versions of the complaints procedure include the correct contact details for Ofsted (NMS 4.8)
- review the wedging of two fire doors in the residential units. (NMS 26.1)