

St Elizabeth's School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117665
Local Authority	N/A
Inspection number	358171
Inspection dates	8–9 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Sheila Nolan

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	5–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	49
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	28
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sister Annetter Clemence
Headteacher	Brian Sainsbury (Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	3 October 2007
School address	South End Much Hadham SG10 6EW
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Age group	5–19
Inspection dates	8–9 November 2010
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Boarding provision

Social care Unique Reference Number

SC019543

Social care inspector

Mary Timms

Age group 5–19

Inspection dates 8–9 November 2010

Inspection number 358171

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors visited seven lessons taught by seven teachers and also observed teaching assistants at work. They held meetings with pupils, members of the governing body and staff. They observed the school's work, scrutinised the school's self-evaluation documents and safeguarding policies as well as information on pupils' progress. Inspectors also took account of the 8 questionnaires returned by parents, the 45 by both day pupils and boarders, and the 75 by staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- Are learning opportunities within the residential accommodation closely linked to pupils' learning in school?
- Are the teachers' expectations of all groups of pupils high enough?
- How well does the curriculum support pupils' progress?
- Are all staff fully involved in the school's self-evaluation cycle?

Information about the school

St Elizabeth's school shares a campus site with a specialist college which has provision for students aged 19 to 25 and for older people with special educational needs and disabilities. The school provides for pupils with a wide range of very complex learning and medical needs. The majority of pupils have severe learning difficulties. Almost three quarters of the school's current cohort of pupils have epilepsy and other neurological conditions. Additionally, many students have autistic spectrum disorders and around a quarter have physical disabilities. There are fewer pupils designated with profound and multiple learning difficulties than at the last inspection. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Most are boarders. At the time of the inspection there were three pupils under the age of eleven. One five year old pupil joined the school in the past few weeks. Boys outnumber girls and the vast majority of the pupils are from White British backgrounds.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**1****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****1**

Main findings

St Elizabeth's is an outstanding school that does exceptionally well for all of its groups of pupils. One parent commented, reflecting the views of others: 'We cannot believe how happy our child is since joining St Elizabeth's. Previously, he made no friends, but now has a best friend.' Pupils make outstanding progress because of good teaching and an imaginative curriculum that is particularly well integrated with a very high quality of care, guidance and support. The school's staff engage fully with parents and carers, keeping them up-to-date with pupils' developments through their preferred communication channels. They particularly appreciate the annual DVD records of the pupils' activities as well as the weekly emails. Partnerships between the medical, pastoral care and school staff are exceptional as are those with external agencies, all in the best interests of the pupils. The school staff are very robust in ensuring that they challenge any discrimination against the pupils and make sure they promote equality of opportunity vigorously. As a result, pupils with physical disabilities for example join in the football team and the cheerleader club.

There are comprehensive packages for individual pupils, including those at post-16. Sixth form provision is excellent and the young people achieve as well as they possibly can, going on to well-chosen training and education. Pupils at all levels make rapid progress in their personal development and in their basic skills. Most leave with a range of accreditation which is well-matched to their stages of development. However, pupils' attainment is low by comparison with age-related expectations. Pupils prepare well for their future through work experience and college visits.

The good quality of teaching found at the time of the previous inspection has improved further. For all groups of pupils, expectations are high. Nevertheless, information and recommendations from the medical and therapy team about what helps the pupils learn has yet to become embedded in all teachers' planning. Occasionally, too, the pace of lessons slows because adults talk too much and this limits the activities in which pupils engage.

The school has improved in many ways since the last inspection. Those pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are now very well provided for in their learning. The links between residential provision and the school are coordinated exceptionally well at all times. Leaders and managers have a very accurate picture of the quality of teaching and of assessment practice in the classroom through its regular monitoring. Staff at all levels are involved in the rigorous annual self-evaluation cycle which is mostly accurate but modest in some respects. The excellent leadership and management of senior leaders are well evidenced in these improvements and demonstrate the school's outstanding capacity to improve further. This harmonious community promotes community cohesion to the best of its ability given the nature of its mission.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching further so that it matches the best by July 2011 by:
 - ensuring that classroom staff are able to embed the findings from the medical team in planning learning activities
 - making sure that all staff understand how to pace lessons to get the best learning for all pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

The quality of learning in individual lessons is good and at times outstanding. Over time, and in conjunction with the stimulating curriculum and carefully integrated with medical therapy and care provision, daily good learning results in outstanding progress and achievement for most groups of pupils. Learning activities are regularly planned to ensure that pupils can achieve as well as their medical conditions allow. This was clearly demonstrated in a physical education session for Years 10 and 11. Excellent relationships and the wide range of exciting options enabled pupils with complex needs and profound and multiple learning difficulties to make rapid progress in gaining confidence in physical skills.

Pupils also make excellent progress in their personal development. They are happy

- to come to school, attend very regularly, mostly behave well and feel very secure and safe. They manage the transition between the boarding accommodation and the classrooms particularly well. The 'challenge' activities that link school and home or school and boarding are very successful in extending learning throughout 24 hours.

Pupils prepare well for their next stage of training and education, especially through the life skills programme. Work experience and enterprise weeks are very helpful in encouraging pupils' special talents. One pupil designs and makes jewellery, for example, and has a display in a local shop. Another is very involved in successful film making.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy a wide range of planned and unstructured physical activities and are regularly helped to develop their understanding of how to eat healthily and to match their diets to their medical needs. They take a very active role in helping within both the school and boarding. Those who can take turns, for example, in planning, shopping for ingredients, and in cooking main meals for lunch. They contribute well to village and local community events, join in carol singing, art projects, raise funds for charity and strive to save energy on the site. Behaviour is good and this represents excellent progress, especially for those who have had difficult histories in other settings. Pupils' spiritual, cultural, social and moral development is excellent. They participate enthusiastically in the key festivals of the Christian calendar and celebrate the main festivals of other faiths. Pupils are able to appreciate the stillness engendered by prayer opportunities in their religious education lessons.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

How effective is the provision?

The day-to-day good teaching is a strong contributory factor in the pupils' excellent progress. A very strong aspect of teaching is the way learning activities are grounded in real-life situations. From making musical instruments by re-cycling materials to English and communication tasks based around a supermarket visit, pupils are encouraged to apply their basic skills practically. Behaviour management is excellent. Many staff make the most of opportunities in lessons to record small steps in learning and to use this information to plan future work. There is a real effort by all staff to ensure that pupils achieve of their best and that genuine talents are developed. The art work is a clear example of how staff strive to develop pupils' abilities. Support staff are very well deployed and there is excellent collaboration between all the adults in a lesson. Despite good planning and excellent resources, however, the school is very aware that staff need further training to embed the recommendations from the medical therapy team in planning learning activities

The rich curriculum is very well balanced to meet both learning and care needs. The school is striving to become a centre of excellence for sensory, medical and physical conditions. As a result, outstanding care, guidance and support are interwoven throughout the curriculum. Medical advice, for example, as to the environments in which individual pupils learn best is taken into account when planning the academic curriculum. All pupils

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have communication difficulties, and signing and pictorial representation are an automatic part of the curriculum. Pupils benefit greatly from the wide range of therapies and high quality medical services that are well matched to their complex needs. They enjoy extensive enrichment activities, including coastal sea voyages, riding, swimming, drama and scouts. The life-skills programme is a real strength of the curriculum.

Exceptional care, guidance and support for the pupils are based on the very clear understanding that staff have of each pupil's needs. This understanding opens the door to their long-term learning as well as to their personal development. The close collaboration between boarding and the school, and home and the school, ensures that learning continues at all stages of the day. All staff treat pupils with great respect and transitions to the next stage of training and education are very well managed. The annual review process is very well managed. Teachers consider pupils' readiness for the next steps carefully. Risk assessments are carried out systematically for each pupil and records of incidents are meticulously recorded.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, in post for two years, has managed a range of necessary changes exceptionally well. Some staff have found the changes difficult at times, particularly those involving the re-structuring of posts among the two hundred staff. Nevertheless, senior staff share an ambitious vision for the school and the young people in their care and communicate this very well to the majority of the staff, involving them regularly in the self-evaluation cycle. The governing body is fully involved in the strategic planning for the school's future and challenges the school robustly, when needed, through regular on-site visits and monitoring, some unannounced.

The school seeks to improve its practice in all aspects of its work. It has been very successful in interweaving residential care with daily learning. Pupils' developments, both personal and academic, are tracked regularly through well-tried whole-school procedures and assessments are carefully moderated. Discrimination is tackled robustly. Staff are very active in ensuring that any stereotypical views of its young people are challenged effectively. Procedures for safeguarding are very secure. They identify loopholes and remedy them rapidly. Excellent partnerships with external agencies, specialised therapists and medical staff, contribute very effectively to the care, guidance and support of the pupils. School staff engage parents and carers fully in the pupils' development through a wide-ranging programme of events and regular activities. Within the boundaries necessarily set by its remit, staff promote community cohesion exceptionally well. The

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school has wide global links with countries such as India and the Cameroon, and pupils are involved well in the local community. Pupils have excellent opportunities to come to understand life in other parts of the country. Relationships are very harmonious with those few from minority ethnic groups very well integrated into the community life of the school and boarding.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

The excellent curriculum and care, guidance and support within the sixth form are very well coordinated with activities in the rest of the school. Indeed, post-16 students are at the heart of the school, contributing much to the community through their life-skills projects and care for younger pupils. They continue to make the best progress possible in learning and in their personal development. They learn to manage their medical challenges and gain independence, where possible, in taking ever greater charge of their medications. The differentiated programmes to match emerging needs are particularly successful at post-16. Students gain external accreditation whenever possible. Many have already gained entry level certificates in adult literacy and numeracy. Work-related opportunities and college visits prepare students well for the next stage of training and education. All students go on to the best provision available for them. Teaching is at least good. Just occasionally, the pace of learning slows, the result of too much 'teacher talk'. The day-to-day management of the post-16 provision is excellent and the sixth form is very well led by senior school staff.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Boarding provision

The provision of boarding is outstanding. The school meets all national minimum standards with a high number exceeded. The overall management structure and the strong sense of community within the school contribute effectively to pupil's protection and well-being. The high standard of boarding provision is underpinned and guided by clearly written policies and procedures.

Staff understand pupils' disabilities and complex health needs and deliver a high standard of well-planned care. Pupils are closely supervised and monitored by experienced and well-trained staff who are available in appropriate numbers.

Pupils are cared for in a safe environment where fire safety is prioritised. Health and safety and maintenance requirements are monitored and supported by staff with dedicated roles and responsibilities.

The boarding houses have been developed to meet the needs of each group and also to be relevant for individuals. For example, high-low facilities are provided in some areas. As a result pupils using wheelchairs are able to share activities. Also, required hoists and bathroom adaptations are provided. Imaginative wall displays brighten the boarding houses. Creative staff present information using simple language and symbols. This supports pupils to understand care arrangements and engages them in shared activities.

There are excellent arrangements in place to monitor and support pupils' health. A multi-disciplinary team of healthcare professionals take a lead in health care planning and are a valuable component of the provision of care at this school. There are strong links with local primary healthcare services and also with involved specialist health. There is a safe system of medication administration, which is closely monitored by the head nurse. Only key staff who have been appropriately trained and assessed as competent to administer medication.

Pupils are provided with a balanced and varied diet. The main meal of the day is prepared in a central kitchen by a well-managed catering department. Breakfast and lunch are prepared on the boarding houses by care staff and children. Dietary needs relating to health, preference and culture are supported.

Pupils are effectively protected by robust safeguarding arrangements. Required checks are completed prior to care staff commencing work. The school has developed links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and safeguarding arrangements are monitored by senior staff who have completed advanced safeguarding training.

Behaviour is well managed. A behaviour support co-coordinator and trainer take a lead within the development of detailed behaviour management plans and risk assessments.

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Behaviour management strategies are monitored and reviewed regularly to ensure that they remain relevant and effective.

There is a culture of inclusion across the school within which pupils are encouraged to reach their full potential. All pupils follow a life skills programme and are set challenges which have been developed by education, health and residential teams. Expectations are set within the abilities of each child. Examples are, experiencing new sensory stimulation, collecting leaves on a walk, making a cake with staff, assisting with food shopping and preparation of lunch. Pupils receive excellent support to develop their skills and abilities. For example, one-to-one support with a broad range of activities is facilitated within the boarding provision. Pupils are also supported to take part in evening groups and activities away from the school.

There is a commitment to providing pupils with opportunities for consultation and choice. House meetings are held each week, during which pupils are able to raise issues for discussion and are consulted about shared care arrangements. Speech and language therapists guide individual communication plans which support pupils to make their views known.

There is excellent provision for the effective monitoring of the welfare of boarders. The quality of care pupils receive is monitored closely by the management team and also during visits made by representatives from the board of governors.

National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

- All national minimum standards are met.

These are the grades for the boarding provision

The effectiveness of the boarding provision	1
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Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who returned questionnaires were mostly very positive about the school's work. They were especially pleased about the quality of teaching in the school and by how much progress the pupils make over their time at St Elizabeth's. A few parents had minor individual concerns but inspectors found nothing to justify these.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Elizabeth's School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 8 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 49 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	2	25	6	75	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	3	38	4	50	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	4	50	2	25	1	13	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	2	25	6	75	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	3	38	3	38	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	2	25	4	50	2	25	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	3	38	4	50	1	13	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	2	25	5	63	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	3	38	5	63	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	2	25	5	63	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	2	25	4	50	1	13	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	2	25	4	50	1	13	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	3	38	5	63	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

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.



10 November 2010

Dear Sixth form Students and Pupils

Inspection of St Elizabeth's School, Much Hadham, SG10 6EW

Thank you for welcoming us when we visited your excellent school recently, and for telling us your views. We are very pleased that you were so confident to do so. We were happy to see that you behave well and that you try to respect each other.

Adults look after you exceptionally well and keep you very safe. You get lots of good support in lessons and make excellent progress during your time at St Elizabeth's.

There are lots of exciting things for you to learn and do. You told us you like your enterprise opportunities very much and enjoy your visits to places of work and to college.

To make your school even better, we have asked that your teachers are given more help to plan your lessons, taking into account what the medical staff say will support you. We have also asked them to make sure that none of you have to listen for too long so that you can get on with practical activities.

We hope you will continue to help each other as you do now, especially cooking meals for your houses.

Enjoy your sport, the Scouts and your work experience and all the other good things about St Elizabeth's.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Nolan

Lead Inspector

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