

St Edmund's Church of England Girls' School and Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126468
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	364008
Inspection dates	12–13 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Andrew Harrett HMI

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	778
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev David Linaker
Headteacher	Mrs Jacqui Goodall
Date of previous school inspection	4 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. They observed 30 lessons taught by 29 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of students, representatives of the governing body and school staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation relating to safeguarding, school development planning and assessment and tracking data. They analysed returned questionnaires from staff, students and 338 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether there is variation in achievement between subjects and between groups of students, particularly those of middle and lower ability and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The consistency of the quality of teaching and learning in different subjects.
- The quality of leadership and management at all levels of the school.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free schools is lower than average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and the proportion whose first language is believed not to be English are lower than average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average. The school has specialist status in sports and has Healthy School status.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

In this good school, the students' achievement is good and their personal development outstanding. The school's Christian ethos underpins the excellent quality of care, guidance and support. Consequently, the students' behaviour and attitudes to work are superb. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They make an excellent contribution to the school and local community, feel safe in school and develop an exceptional maturity for their age.

Students enter the school with attainment that is broadly average, though with fewer students than average at the highest levels, reflecting the selective system in which the school operates. By the end of Year 11, attainment is above average. Students make good progress in all year groups, reflecting the consistently good quality of teaching and of assessment, both of which have strengthened since the last inspection. Nevertheless, there is as yet insufficient excellent teaching to enable the school to achieve its aim of becoming outstanding, although examples of such excellence are evident in the school. The range of assessment methods enables the students to have a clear understanding of their strengths and what they need to do to improve, but the information is not used sufficiently to focus the planning of activities to meet all their particular needs. Consequently, although progress is good, those at the top and bottom of the ability range are not always sufficiently challenged in their work to reach their full potential. Teachers are also sometimes too cautious in their planning, not devising more challenging activities to promote independent learning and raise the students' expectations. Although there is some evidence of more adventurous approaches emerging in the flexible arrangements recently introduced into the curriculum, these are as yet not filtering substantially into the routines of classroom teaching.

Many aspects of the curriculum are outstanding, particularly the superb range of opportunities to participate in activities which develop the students' independence, personal skills and interests. Specialist status in sports permeates the work of the school, having an excellent impact on the students' achievement and participation in the community, and providing many opportunities to take on responsibilities and lead others, for example in partnership with other schools.

The high quality of partnerships through the specialism is typical of the determination of leaders and managers to work with others in constantly finding ways to improve the opportunities for the students. Self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate. Strategic planning is characterised by a judicious blend of planning over time to introduce changes gradually so that they become well embedded, and acting swiftly to rectify any emerging problems. For example, the school is introducing changes to the pastoral structures of the school in a measured way over time but has acted swiftly to rectify some disappointing results in the GCSE examinations in 2010 so that attainment and progress have quickly recovered. This

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Careful planning has ensured that achievement has remained good over time and the excellent quality of many aspects of personal development has been sustained. Consequently, the capacity for further improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and learning in the school by:
 - using assessment information to devise activities tailored for students of different abilities, particularly the more able and those less able who do not have special needs, which challenge their expectations and promote higher achievement
 - ensuring that the range of teaching techniques and learning activities in subjects promote independent learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students make good progress in their learning, particularly in English and mathematics. However, results dipped in the GCSE examinations in 2010; progress was lower than in previous years and the variation between subjects was more accentuated. Careful analysis of the results and rigorous monitoring of the current progress of the students have ensured that the school has now redressed the balance. Attainment for the current Year 11 is above average and the school has convincing assessment data to show that progress is again securely good. This was corroborated by lesson observations during the inspection. There has also been a narrowing of the gap between subjects with improvements noted in many areas, although modern foreign languages has yet to do so at the same rate as other subject areas. Students enjoy their learning and behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the school. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to be eligible for free school meals made similar progress to their peers in the lessons observed during the inspection. When students are given the opportunity for independent work they apply themselves very well and demonstrate a good ability to reflect and question. In contrast, in some lessons, pace of learning dropped when teachers tended to dominate activities rather than facilitating learning.

Students' enjoyment of school and their commitment to learning are reflected in their excellent attendance and punctuality. Incidents of bullying are rare and students report that they are dealt with effectively. They particularly value the 'Green Room' as a safe haven where they are well supported in resolving their problems and worries. The well-planned programme for personal, social and health education places a strong emphasis on the awareness of keeping safe and healthy in their present lives and in the adult world which, coupled with sports status, ensures that students understand how to live healthily. There is a strong emphasis on the safe use of the internet and the school is active in promoting its responsible use. The students are well prepared for their future economic well-being, with many opportunities to develop useful skills and take on responsibilities throughout the school, including active participation in charity work.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	1
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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have good subject knowledge and have excellent relationships with students in lessons. Excellent use of resources and clear linking of tasks to precise learning outcomes ensure that students have high levels of concentration. In the best examples, lessons proceed at a brisk and purposeful pace with plenty of opportunities for students to reflect on their learning. In these lessons, teachers use a wide range of questioning techniques to probe and extend students' understanding, which was noted particularly during the inspection in lessons observed in religious education, music and English. However, in some lessons which were planned for the whole class, the full range of ability was not always catered for, leading to higher- and some lower-ability students making less progress than they could. Pupils with specific special educational needs are supported well in most lessons so they can access the learning.

The curriculum outstandingly promotes personal development. The extensive range of activities, in which the sport specialism is to the fore, is carefully organised so that all groups of students, whatever their needs and background, participate well. Sports partnerships with other schools have enabled students to take on leadership roles at St Edmund's and elsewhere. The school ensures that there is a wide range of courses available and students report that they are excellently advised when choosing their options. Collaboration with the two other secondary schools that share the Laverstock campus has widened choice significantly in the last couple of years. These curriculum

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opportunities help students to be well prepared for their future but are not yet sufficiently embedded to improve the achievement of students from good to outstanding. The recent introduction of the flexible learning day once a fortnight on Thursdays has had a mixed reception from students and parents and carers. The school's monitoring systems have enabled it rightly to identify some issues of content and organisation that it plans to modify. However, the programme is enthusiastically embraced by most of the younger students, who develop useful skills in enjoyable activities. The older students appreciate the opportunity to use the day to carry out assessment tasks, undertake revision sessions and go on appropriate trips, such as to London to improve their understanding of the history of medicine, without an adverse impact on their routine learning.

Superb care, guidance and support ensure that all students, including those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, make the best of their time at school. Students are introduced to the school well and given excellent guidance when leaving, so that the vast majority continue their education, and the proportion not in employment, education or training is very small. Linked to the strong ethos of Christian compassion and support, the school has identified many striking examples of success in supporting vulnerable students so that they continue to do well in their personal and academic education. All students benefit from the exceptional way that the school has helped them to develop resilience in the face of traumatic events that have affected them all.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher demonstrates excellent leadership skills and has the respect and confidence of the whole school community. She is ably supported by a highly effective senior team. Monitoring is rigorous, evaluation is accurate and planning is well focused on improvement. Since the last inspection, leaders and managers have developed more rigorous systems for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning, involving middle leaders more extensively in the process. This has been part of a strategic plan to involve middle leaders more in deciding the future direction of the school, involving them productively in discussions and planning, improving their ability to monitor the work in their areas and to take responsibility for planning for improvement. This has had a positive impact on their effectiveness and sense of their role, although some inconsistencies in the quality of their evaluation and planning persist. The governing body provides the school with good challenge and support, ensuring that it preserves its traditions and ethos while playing a full part in taking it forward in a changing world. It ensures the school adopts good practice in child protection and risk assessments and trains staff well in safeguarding. Community cohesion is promoted well in the school as a

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result of a careful audit of the school's current provision, extensive plans for further improvement and clear procedures for evaluating impact. Leaders and managers make a fine-tuned analysis of assessment information and participation rates in activities to ensure that all groups of students make the most of the opportunities the school provides and that their long-term achievement does not slip below that of their peers. Consequently, all students feel valued and there is no significant variation between groups.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

Those parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire expressed high levels of satisfaction with the way that the school is run and the education that the students receive. There were few negative responses to the questions. In their comments, several parents and carers felt that the school taught their children well but did not always push them to achieve their very best. Inspectors found that all groups of students achieved well but that expectations could be even higher in some lessons. A few parents and carers were unsure about the worth of the newly introduced flexible arrangements in the curriculum every other Thursday. School leaders are committed to reviewing these arrangements, although they are very popular with Key Stage 3 students and students in Key Stage 4 thought that many of the activities were helping them in their studies.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Edmund's Church of England Girls' School and Sports College 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 338 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 778 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	133	39	194	57	10	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	138	41	191	57	4	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	138	41	184	54	13	4	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	131	39	186	55	13	4	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	122	36	196	58	11	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	93	28	206	61	30	9	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	103	30	208	62	19	6	1	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)	103	30	193	57	5	1	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	115	34	204	60	16	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	90	27	201	59	29	9	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	74	22	222	66	16	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	156	46	170	50	9	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	167	49	160	47	8	2	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



14 January 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of St Edmund's Church of England Girls' School and Sports College, Salisbury SP1 1RD

Thank you for the warm welcome that you gave the inspection team when we visited your school. We judged St Edmund's to be a good school in which you achieve well in your subjects and in which you make excellent progress in your personal development. These are the main things that we thought about St Edmund's.

- Your behaviour and attitudes to learning are exceptionally good. We were very impressed by your maturity, politeness, thoughtfulness and care for one another.
- You told us you really appreciate the way in which the school cares for you so excellently, keeping you safe and helping you to make the right decisions in your life and in your learning.
- You are taught well and the assessment of your work helps you to understand how to improve your attainment.
- The good curriculum provides you with exciting opportunities to take part in activities and helps you to do well in your work.
- St Edmund's is a strong community which is well led by the senior leaders.

Even in good schools like yours, there are things which could be improved. We have told the school that to make the next step towards becoming really outstanding they need to make the teaching and learning even better by making sure that they provide you with plenty of challenge and with activities that inspire you to develop as independent learners.

We are sure that with your exceptional maturity and superb behaviour, you will be able to help the school by giving your views of how these improvements can be made and by having the confidence to know that you can do even better than the good progress that you already make.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Harrett

Her Majesty's Inspector

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