

St Elizabeth's School

South End, , Much Hadham, SG10 6EW

Inspection dates

14–15 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Significant changes have been recently introduced to improve areas of the school's work. The changes are moving in the right direction but it is early days. The decline in learning since the previous inspection has not stopped, so achievement is not good.
- Overall, pupils make progress that is expected from their starting points. A small number make better than expected progress and a similar number make less than expected progress. There is no significant difference between the progress made in mathematics and that made in English.
- The sixth form requires improvement as students make similar progress to other pupils.
- In too many lessons, teaching requires improvement as pupils are not encouraged to be as independent as they can be. Expectations are also too low compared to what pupils can achieve. Teachers do not use their knowledge of pupils' needs effectively to challenge them to make good progress.
- The performance of the school is not analysed effectively by the governing body. The reports from school leaders lack detail and do not show in enough depth how well the school is doing.
- The recent introduction of a new approach to literacy is not consistent across all subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- There are very effective links between the school, the residence and health professionals which allow a consistent approach to meeting pupils' social and health needs well.
- The curriculum prepares pupils well for when they leave school.
- Outcomes in the residence are outstanding. This is because pupils benefit from well planned and consistently monitored care plans.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.
- The Chair of the Governing Body has a very strong understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Information about this inspection

- This was a no-notice inspection whereby the school was informed of the inspection shortly before the arrival of the inspectors. The inspection was scheduled as the result of a request from the Department for Education following concerns raised around behaviour management and pupil safety.
- Documents were scrutinised and discussions held with the acting principal and head of care around the concerns which triggered the inspection.
- Nine lessons were observed and pupils' learning and progress were also evaluated by looking at their work and through case studies.
- Meetings were held with the acting principal, one of the senior teachers, the head of care, the Chair of the Governing Body and a group of teachers. Pupils' views were gained in meetings with two groups and informal conversations with other pupils during the inspection. Inspectors took in to account seven responses from parents or carers to the Parent View survey. A wide range of documents were scrutinised, including the school's data about pupils' progress, the school's self-evaluation documents and improvement plans, the minutes of governing body meetings and sub-committee meetings, the school's monitoring of teaching, attendance data and individual pupils' records. Inspectors also scrutinised documents related to safeguarding and child protection.
- The social care inspector regulatory inspector also spent time with pupils in the residence in the evening and early morning. She also held a range of meetings with members of the care and health staff.
- As this is a non-maintained school it does not receive pupil premium (additional funds from the government) nor is maintained by a local authority. As a result, no comments have been made about the impact of these on the school's performance in this report.

Inspection team

David Muir, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Charlie Henry

Her Majesty's Inspector

Gwen Buckley

Social Care Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Elizabeth's School is a non-maintained special school for pupils who have a wide range of complex learning and medical needs. A majority of pupils have epilepsy or other neurological conditions. In addition, some students have other conditions such as autistic spectrum disorder, profound and multiple learning difficulties and physical disabilities.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and most are residential pupils. There are more boys than girls and a small proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds
- The last social care inspection was on 17 November 2011 and judged the provision to be outstanding.
- The school's substantive vice-principal is currently acting principal and has been in this post since September 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by making sure that:
 - teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve and use available national information to set ambitious, realistic targets for all pupils based on their starting points
 - teachers have a clear understanding of the levels that students are working at and know how to use this to set work at the right level of difficulty for them
 - teachers have effective training and personal feedback on their own teaching, so that they understand how to make learning in their lessons good or better.
- Improve students' achievement by making sure that:
 - plans are implemented to develop literacy and numeracy practice so that they are consistently applied in the school and the residence
 - students' literacy and numeracy skills develop more securely through well planned opportunities to practise and apply these in all subjects.
- Improve the impact of leaders in the school by:
 - exploring all possible routes to appointing a permanent principal within the shortest possible timeframe.
 - review the use of paperwork to ensure that this is manageable and clearly focused on improving pupils' achievement
 - establishing a system to check students' progress over time so that teachers can use accurate information to ensure that their teaching meets the needs of all students
 - ensuring that governors understand their role in holding school leaders to account for their work and set leaders clear targets for improving the standard of education provided
 - improve the rigour of tracking and monitoring of behaviour so that standards are improved.
 - undertaking an independent review of governance.
- Update the missing person protocol in line with the guidance given by police.
- Further develop the new electronic system to ensure accurate records are maintained in relation to physical restraints.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The school's information about pupils' progress shows that, over time, most make expected progress from their starting points. Fewer pupils make more than expected progress than would be required to judge achievement to be good. Targets are set for pupils in line with expected outcomes, so there is not as much challenge as there should be for pupils who are able to make more than expected progress. In some exceptional cases, pupils' medical needs affect their learning. All pupils leave school with a recognised qualification.
- Pupils make similar progress in mathematics and English. Progress in these areas requires improvement and leaders have already devised, and started to implement, plans to improve outcomes in these areas. In other areas, including life skills and the promotion of independence, there are significant strengths. As a result of these areas, pupils are helped to be well prepared for the next stages of their lives.
- There are no identified differences over time in the progress made by groups of pupils with different abilities or needs. Students in the post-16 classes make the same progress in their learning as other pupils.
- Independent living skills programmes also encourage residential pupils to take responsibility for their own medication when possible. This is subject to risk assessment and individual ability which helps residential pupils develop the skills and knowledge to manage their medication safely. However the paperwork is not sharp enough to be able to show the progress that pupils make in their life skills over time.
- Outcomes in the residences are outstanding. Parents and pupils are very positive about the pupils' personal development plans. Good behaviour is positively encouraged and modelled by staff. The medical side shows clear evidence of outstanding improvements in relation to the pupils' medical needs. This is due to the skills within the staff and the high quality training that they receive as well as the strong links the school has developed with nationally recognised experts in epilepsy. However, in some cases, risk assessments are too generic especially with reference to taking pupils to ground when needed, for their safety. They need to be more finely tuned to identify the difference between pupils.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching has deteriorated, in all key stages including post-16, from good at the time of the previous inspection. During this inspection, most of the teaching seen was graded as requires improvement. Some good and some inadequate teaching was also seen. The school's records of the quality of teaching over time are too positive as they judge the majority of teaching to be outstanding. During this inspection, no outstanding teaching was seen. Joint observations, during the inspection with school leaders, confirmed that there is sometimes an optimistic view of the quality of teaching.
- Where teaching is better, pupils are encouraged to learn independently and they receive well-targeted support from learning support assistants. These lessons are well-judged to meet the needs of all pupils and the learning proceeds at a good pace with rapid movement from one activity to the next. All activities are clearly focused on what pupils are expected to learn.
- In the weaker lessons, expectations are too low. Pupils are not fully engaged in the lessons and

what they are expected to learn is not clear. This means that they are not challenged to make good progress. Staff know individual pupils well, but this information is not always used as well as it could be to focus learning or to set aspirational targets based on national data. This means that pupils are not fully engaged in learning at all times and time is wasted.

- Some opportunities to focus on literacy and numeracy in other subjects are missed and more could be done to promote better progress in developing pupils' skills in these areas. The school's leaders have now implemented an action plan to improve staff's skills in teaching literacy and understanding their roles as teachers of literacy. When reading, pupils showed confidence in using the sounds letters make to help them read new words, relative to their reading ages.
- All parents who responded to Parent View thought that their children were taught well.
- Residential provision has a positive impact on residential pupils' lives, enhancing their personal and social development. A strong and stable staff team support the residential pupils to aspire and work towards independence safely.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The school is orderly throughout and pupils say that they feel safe. All parents who responded to the Parent View survey agreed with this. Although pupils say there is some bullying, they enthusiastically agreed that this is always handled well by staff. All pupils spoken to were able to name at least one member of staff who they trusted and could talk to if they needed to.
- Staff model very positive behaviour as a matter of course, which means that pupils are continually exposed to positive models of the behaviour expected of them. As a result their behaviour improves over time.
- Pupils are open and welcoming and relate well to the adults in the school, to visitors and to each other. While there are some incidents of distracted behaviour in some lessons, this is often the result of teaching that has failed to engage them in their learning. Residential pupils take on responsibilities such as organising events and representing their fellow pupils at meetings. This helps them make good progress socially and prepares them well for the future.
- The main focus of behaviour management is to keep pupils safe, encourage them to understand and take control of their own feelings, and to reward positive behaviour. The systems are constantly being reviewed and different strategies used to help pupils learn to manage their own often very challenging behaviour.
- Pupils have safe places they can go to if they need to calm down and manage their feelings. In the residences, some pupils have shown a significant improvement in behaviour and the need to impose sanctions has completely stopped.
- There is a wide range of specialist medical staff such as epilepsy specialist nurses, learning disability specialist, clinical psychologist, speech and language specialist and occupational therapist within the school who provide valuable support. There is also an external consultant in epilepsy who visits and provides clinical support to staff and oversees individual epilepsy management programmes.
- Parents are extremely positive about the care provided and the positive outcomes this offers their child. They report, 'Staff do not just go the extra mile, they do millions of miles more'.

- New systems to record incidents of behaviour and physical restraint have recently been introduced. This is now starting to allow the school to use the data that is collected to see patterns and trends in behaviour which can in turn be used more effectively to provide support to individual pupils.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Concerns which triggered this unannounced inspection were investigated during this inspection. Inspectors were satisfied that the school acts appropriately when managing pupils' behaviour. It is clear from the work of the school that safety and dignity are paramount when considering pupils' needs. In addition, the school's leaders have been active in analysing incidents regularly and learning from them, to ensure that any future incidents are handled even more appropriately.
- A number of significant changes have been introduced to tackle the recent decline in performance in the school. These initiatives have included a new approach to literacy across the school; a sensory curriculum for pupils with more severe and profound learning needs; the establishment of a behaviour working party; a new tool for analysing patterns in behaviour and wider accreditation for life skills. However, leaders are aware that the number of action plans and improvement documents need to be streamlined so that they are more focused and easier to implement and measure.
- Leaders' inaccurate view of teaching means that appropriate training needed to improve teaching has not been provided as the focus has been on moving to outstanding when too much teaching is currently inadequate or requires improvement. Leaders are updating the school's procedures for holding staff to account for their performance.
- Although pupil data is moderated within the school, no comparisons are made with other schools to ensure that judgments made in St Elizabeth's are accurate. The school is already seeking partners in order to rectify this.
- The head of care is working to address deficiencies in the behaviour management systems, by requesting changes to the electronic system and has organised training for staff on good practice issues in record keeping in relation to physical restraints and how to use the new system.
- The curriculum is good and effectively meets the needs of all pupils and prepares them well for the next stage of their lives. There is a good emphasis on physical exercise and personal and social development. There are good links with the local community, which give pupils opportunities to undertake work experience. There is also an annual careers week where employers come to school to help pupils develop a better understanding of the world of work.
- There are a wide range of activities which contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The joint work between the health professionals, the residence and the school provides a strong basis for developing social and moral awareness. A range of themed days and fundraising activities contribute to spiritual and cultural aspects well.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Although the Chair of the Governing Body has a clear view of the strengths and weakness in the school, the governing body has not effectively held the school to account for its

performance in recent years. Although governors regularly visit the school, it is clear from the scrutiny of minutes from meetings that governors have not questioned the school's leaders effectively enough to have identified that the performance of the school has deteriorated. They are now developing a greater awareness of performance management, what is being done to recognise and reward good teachers and tackle underperformance, and their involvement in making decisions about salary progression and promotion issues. They do not have a full understanding of performance data or how the school compares with other similar schools. They are involved in setting the budget. The school meets requirements with regard to safeguarding. Staff and governors have undertaken appropriate training in child protection and safer recruitment.

Outcomes for residential pupils	are outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	is good
Residential pupils' safety	is adequate
Leadership and management of the residential provision	is good

- The ethos of the residential provision is based on openness, trust and respect that celebrates individuality and achievement. Residential pupils are seen as unique and individual care and health needs are recognised and well managed. Residential pupils' views are central to the development of the care. Residential pupils influence daily routines.
- Staff in the residences feel well supported by managers and peers. They have regular supervision and on-going training. The duties which different staff are asked to undertake are considered by the training department with training provided in line with these responsibilities. This training ensures staff are skilled and competent to meet the needs of residential pupils.
- Residential pupils engage in an excellent range of activities and socialise on a regular basis with other young people both in the centre and in the wider community. Residential pupils make a positive contribution to life at the school and in the wider community and are raising money for the 'Children in Need' charity.
- Pupils benefit from well-planned and consistently monitored care and health plans. Effective communication between staff groups across the centre and excellent health care facilities ensure residential pupils' emotional and physical health needs are identified and effectively met.
- Healthy lifestyles are promoted and residential pupils learn the importance of exercise and healthy eating. They have choice of meals each day and they report that the food is good. Special diets are catered for such as specific religious, cultural, medical needs and individual preferences.
- As a result of concerns noted by staff in risk assessments for a few pupils who may try to run away from staff, specific guidelines have been developed for staff working with these pupils. Improvements have also been made to the school's missing person procedure and protocol which means that detailed maps of the area are now available to staff. Consultation over developing the missing person protocol used by the school has taken place with local police. A suggested amendment, as a result of this consultation, is yet to be incorporated into the school's missing from home protocol.
- No complaints have been received by the residence since the previous inspection. Residential pupils and family members report they know how to complain. Family members report always

being made welcome by staff and that they are kept up-to-date with events in their child's life and how their child is.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>
Residential provision		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	117665
Social care unique reference number	SC019543
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	410230

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

The inspection of residential provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

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	44
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	28
Number of boarders on roll	34
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Annette Chambers
Acting principal	Mark Michalkiewicz
Date of previous school inspection	08 November 2010
Telephone number	01279 844270
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