

St Edward's Royal Free Ecumenical Middle School

Parsonage Lane, Windsor, SL4 5EN

Inspection dates 25–26 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school is popular and highly regarded by the overwhelming majority of parents and carers, who appreciate the information they receive about their children's progress. One parent or carer summed up the school accurately as having a 'strong academic ethos within a fun, caring and nurturing environment'.
- Pupils make good progress, particularly in English, mathematics and science, and reach high standards by the end of Year 8. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary in lessons and around the school. Pupils enjoy school and their attendance is very good.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are integrated well into lessons and helped to make good progress.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic. Relationships are very positive and help to promote an atmosphere in which pupils are keen to learn and happy to answer and ask questions.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well through its Christian ethos, broad and balanced range of subjects and good number of extra-curricular clubs, activities and trips.
- Leaders are ambitious for the school and have a clear view about the need to improve the quality of teaching and learning. They are collecting a good range of data about pupils' progress and tracking these effectively. They have worked hard to raise standards in literacy, including introducing a library-based reading scheme. Subject teachers promote literacy consistently well in lessons.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Some aspects of teaching are not yet consistently good, such as the challenge of work in lessons for the most-able pupils and the quality of written feedback to pupils.
- The monitoring of lessons and pupils' work is not frequent enough to ensure consistently high-quality teaching.
- The governing body is very supportive, but not providing enough robust challenge to the school's leaders.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection took place over two days, with a team of three inspectors, one of whom was present only on the first day.
- Inspectors observed 29 lessons, or part lessons, two assemblies and lunchtime activities.
- Inspectors held discussions with pupils during lessons, around the school and in an organised meeting. They spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, three members of the governing body, teachers with subject and other responsibilities, other teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with a local authority advisor and with the School Improvement Partner who has been working with the school for a number of years.
- Inspectors analysed the 22 responses to the staff questionnaire, the 101 responses on Parent View and seven letters or emails from parents and carers to the inspection team.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents provided by the school, including the minutes of meetings of the governing body, the school development plan, the self-evaluation summary, pupils' progress data, safeguarding documents and records, policies, provision maps for pupils receiving additional support, a range of pupils' work, and records of the monitoring of lessons.

Inspection team

Helena McVeigh, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Justine Hocking	Additional Inspector
Shahnaz Maqsood	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Edwards Royal Free Ecumenical Middle School is a middle-deemed-secondary school, for pupils from Year 5, half way through Key Stage 2, to Year 8, one year before the end of Key Stage 3. It is much smaller than the average secondary school. A number of pupils leave each year at the end of Year 6 to attend secondary schools that take pupils from Year 7.
- The school is ecumenical and was established from the merger of Anglican and Roman Catholic schools in 1986. It is supported by both the Oxford Anglican and Portsmouth Roman Catholic dioceses.
- The school is currently experiencing building work, which will provide additional accommodation for an extra 30 pupils next year, as it moves from three to four forms of entry.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children in the care of the local authority and the children of service families) is much lower than the national average, but increasing. The school has a small number of children from service families in each year group and five pupils who are in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average, with very small numbers of pupils from a wide range of groups. The largest ethnic group is of White British heritage (83%), with pupils of Any other White heritage being the next biggest at 6% of the roll.
- A very small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language, and none is at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportions of pupils who receive extra support through school action or school action plus because of their disabilities or special educational needs are lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is above average.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for its pupils.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress for the end of Key Stage 2.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Establish more consistently good and outstanding teaching by:
 - improving the quality of teachers' written feedback to pupils, drawing on the best practice that exists in some subjects
 - ensuring that the most-able pupils are given work that stretches them in lessons
 - improving the way that the quality of teaching is monitored through more regular, recorded lesson observations, learning walks and the scrutiny of pupils' work.
- Ensure that governors provide more challenge to the school leaders, based on a more secure knowledge of performance data and school priorities.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils come to St Edwards from 14 different first schools and their attainment on entry is well above average in most year groups, although a number perform below the expected level for their age. Pupils are helped to settle in quickly to the subject-based curriculum that they experience from Year 5 onwards.
- All groups of pupils, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress in all subjects, including English, mathematics and science. The proportion of pupils that make more than expected progress tends to increase as the pupils move from Key Stage 2 into Key Stage 3. This is particularly evident in mathematics, where pupils' progress accelerates in Key Stage 3. By Year 8, the standard of pupils' work is high in many subjects.
- The school's own data, some of which have been externally moderated, show that in the majority of subjects, most Year 8 pupils attain at least Level 5, which is the expected level for their age. In English, mathematics and science, over half the pupils attained Level 6 or above in 2012. Several pupils reached Level 7 in English and a good number attained Level 7 in mathematics, with a few reaching Level 8. This represents a very high standard and good progress for these pupils. Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education.
- There is a good focus on the development of literacy across all subjects, which is having a positive impact on pupils' attainment. Pupils are encouraged to read and write at length in many subjects. They take pride in the presentation of their work as well as in the content. They speak confidently in front of their peers and use technical vocabulary accurately, such as 'scenario' and 'genre' in English, 'trilogy' in religious education, 'secondary colours' in art, and 'sedimentary' and 'weathering' in science.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are integrated well into lessons and often receive effective additional support from a teaching assistant. The school identifies a wider cohort of pupils that are falling behind and provides extra support for them, planned carefully using a provision map. These pupils make good progress during their time in school.
- The school carefully tracks the progress of pupils eligible for the pupil premium and has used the extra funds in a number of different ways, including one-to-one tuition, equipment and access to extra-curricular clubs and school visits. The gap in attainment between eligible and non-eligible Year 6 pupils narrowed in English in 2012, to eligible pupils being three months behind, but the gap remained wide in mathematics, with a 13 month lag. By the time they leave school in Year 8, this gap has narrowed in both subjects. However, these figures need to be treated with caution as in 2012 there were only seven eligible pupils.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers, who are nearly all subject specialists, are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about what they are teaching. They use technical terms accurately and make good use of key words as part of the school's approach to improving literacy.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils. They establish a warm, friendly and purposeful atmosphere in lessons, which enables pupils to feel confident to answer and ask questions. The pupils respond well and listen attentively when the teacher or another pupil is talking. Boys and girls take part eagerly in practical activities and cooperate extremely well in groups. The school's 'attitudes to learning' approach is understood by pupils and applied well in lessons.
- Teachers use a range of approaches to engage pupils, such as games, video clips and problem-solving activities. This was seen to good effect in a Year 7 mathematics lesson involving a task entitled, 'Are you faster than a chicken?' Pupils calculated their speed in metres per second (based on measurements taken on the running track), converted this to miles per hour, and compared their results with others in the class as well as with a range of other animals, including

a chicken, before moving on to combining the results in frequency charts. The lesson was challenging for the most-able pupils and the less-able pupils were supported effectively by a teaching assistant; one boy was heard to call out excitedly, 'Now I get it!'

- Teachers plan lessons carefully, and they identify how they will tailor tasks to the different needs and abilities of their pupils. In practice, pupils mainly have to work at the pace directed by the teacher, however, and are not given enough opportunities to be independent, and there is not always enough challenge for the most-able pupils. Feedback collected by the school this month from gifted and talented pupils included such comments as, 'We enjoy work where we are finding out or problem solving' and 'Sometimes the work is too easy.' These able pupils are achieving well, but could be doing even better in some cases.
- The quality of written feedback to pupils is inconsistent. Most teachers check pupils' work regularly and provide written comments, but these are often simply encouraging such as 'Well done!' The best feedback occurs in English, science, design and technology and in some mathematics books, where teachers are using 'what went well' and 'even better if'. These teachers include constructive comments that suggest how to improve and, in some cases, pupils are responding, when given time to do so.
- Some subject teachers use an approach called 'assessing pupils' progress' that involves sharing explicit criteria with pupils linked to level descriptors. This approach enables pupils to check their own progress and they are generally familiar with their current level, their target level and how to reach it. Gifted pupils like this approach and commented on the level descriptors for design and technology as 'super clear – very helpful'.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The way pupils behave in lessons and around the school is exemplary and a major strength of the school. Their behaviour and attitude contribute to the calm, purposeful atmosphere. Pupils are keen to learn. They are attentive and polite to their teachers and to each other. Incidents of misbehaviour are extremely rare as indicated by comments from the pupils, staff and parents and carers.
- Pupils feel safe in school and say that bullying is virtually non-existent. They are well aware of the different types of bullying and explained that they have lessons and assemblies about them. Pupils of all ages readily praised their teachers and explained how approachable they are if they have a personal or school problem they want to discuss. The school promotes equality of opportunity very effectively and ensures that all aspects of safeguarding meet requirements.
- Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy their lessons, clubs and after-school activities. Their punctuality and attendance are very good. Pupils' attendance has remained consistently above average. There are few pupils with high levels of absence and these are tracked very carefully by the school, drawing on external agencies to support the families where necessary.

The leadership and management are good

- School leaders are ambitious for the school and have worked hard to improve the quality of teaching through monitoring, professional development and a revised appraisal process. Their judgements on the quality of lessons are mainly accurate and focused appropriately on pupils' learning and outcomes. Monitoring and feedback have led to improvements in teaching quality in some cases. There are not, though, very many observations, learning walks or opportunities to scrutinise pupils' work, beyond those for performance management purposes. As a result the quality of teaching is not as good as it could be.
- The school has improved its approach to tracking pupils' attainment and progress. Appropriate performance data are collected regularly and pupil-progress meetings are held with teachers to identify pupils who are falling behind and to plan interventions for them.

- The school offers what one parent or carer described as an 'academic curriculum' with specialist subject teaching from Year 5, which is appreciated by pupils and parents and carers. Subjects are enhanced by a very good range of extra-curricular clubs and activities, including trips and visits to places of interest linked to learning in school, such as the Houses of Parliament, Windsor Castle and a French trip. Pupils also take part in a number of local competitions including mathematics challenges and Junior MasterChef.
- Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is promoted particularly well. There is a strong Christian ethos where respect and spirituality are highly valued. There are spiritual retreats for Years 5 and 8 and worship during assemblies. Members of the local clergy visit regularly to take assemblies. Art and music are strong features of the school. Pupils are given a number of responsibilities, such as being a prefect or a reading buddy. The school council is involved in staff recruitment.
- Parents and carers are very supportive of the school and say that they receive good information about their children's progress. The school has found ways to increase the involvement of parents and carers through, for example, curriculum information evenings, and good use is made of the student diary to communicate with parents and carers.
- The local authority is confident of the capacity of the school's leadership and offers only light-touch support. The deputy headteacher has recently been involved in supporting a local school for one day each week.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Many governors have been associated with the school for some time and are very positive about the leadership and the quality of education. Governors have played a very active role in helping with the plans for the new school building.
 - Governors have undertaken a range of training, taking advantage of the local authority service. They have been involved in the recruitment of new staff and begun a programme of regular visits to the school, resulting in reports that pose some relevant and challenging questions for the leadership team.
 - The headteacher keeps governors well informed through detailed reports and governors hold him to account through the performance management process. However, they are over-reliant on this information and have not offered enough challenge based on their own, in-depth knowledge of performance data and are not sufficiently aware of the school's main priorities for improvement.
 - Governors are aware in general terms of the outcomes of teachers' performance management and the link with salary progression, and how well the pupil premium funds are being spent.

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>

School details

Unique reference number	110086
Local authority	Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	412308

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	376
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Derek Moss
Headteacher	Mr Rod Welsh
Date of previous school inspection	8–9 July 2010
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