

St Edmund's Girls' School

Church Road, Laverstock, Salisbury, SP1 1RD

Inspection dates 19–20 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, well supported by other school leaders and by governors, has taken strong actions that have improved the quality of teaching and students' achievement. Together, they are committed to ensuring that all students make the best possible progress in all aspects of their development.
- Teaching is good across the school because teachers have high expectations of what students can do. They make lessons interesting so that students enjoy their lessons and want to do well.
- A large proportion of students gain five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics.
- Students make outstanding progress in English by the end of Year 11. Their progress in mathematics is good and improving.
- Students' behaviour is good. They treat staff with respect and show a strong desire to learn in their lessons.
- Students feel safe in the school and understand how to keep themselves safe in different situations.
- There is very effective support for disadvantaged students and those who need help to catch up in their learning.
- The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school so that students are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Governors are highly effective and show a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Occasionally work is too easy or too difficult for students, which means they do not learn as well as they could.
- Some students' understanding of new learning is not sufficiently thorough because some teachers do not check it rigorously.
- Teachers' marking and feedback do not always indicate to students how to improve their work. Some teachers do not check that students act upon the feedback provided.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students' learning in parts of 33 lessons. Sixteen of these observations were conducted jointly with members of the school's leadership team. Inspectors also observed an assembly and visited several tutor groups.
- Inspectors looked at students' work in lessons and carried out two detailed scrutinies of their written work in several subjects.
- Inspectors held meetings with two groups of students to hear their views on learning and behaviour in the school. They also spoke informally with students during their breaks and lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other staff with leadership responsibilities and five members of the governing body. An inspector held a telephone discussion with the school's improvement consultant to consider the impact of external support for the school.
- Inspectors examined a variety of school documents. These included records of current students' progress, self-evaluation reports, improvement plans, and behaviour and attendance logs. Inspectors also examined a sample of the minutes of governing body meetings and records relating to safeguarding and the management of staff performance.
- Inspectors took account of questionnaires completed by 78 members of staff, 159 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and one letter from a parent or carer.

Inspection team

Sean Thornton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Nabil Chaaban

Additional Inspector

Una Maria Stevens

Additional Inspector

Ann Sydney

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Edmund's Girls' School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds and the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students is below average. These students are supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is below average.
- A small number of students spend part of their time following GCSE courses at Wyvern College, which shares the school site.
- The proportion of students who are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up funding is average. This funding is for students who did not achieve the expected standards in reading or mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- St Edmund's Girls' School converted to become an academy in February 2012. When the previous school, of the same name, was last inspected in January 2011 it was judged to be good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - provide activities that are sufficiently challenging to enable students of all abilities to make their best possible progress
 - rigorously check students' understanding of new learning
 - provide students with marking and feedback that give detailed advice on how to improve
 - check that students act upon the feedback provided.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is committed to ensuring that all students make the best possible progress in all aspects of their development. She is supported well in this ambition by governors and all staff with leadership responsibilities. Together, they are determined to raise achievement to outstanding.
- The leadership of teaching is good. The school's records of the checks on teaching are detailed and show that support programmes are put in place when required. This is leading to improving standards of teaching.
- School leaders ensure that students' behaviour is good by ensuring that all staff have high expectations and by making sure that the school's systems for managing behaviour are followed consistently. Leaders provide support for staff on the rare occasions that it is needed.
- Senior leaders effectively hold subject leaders to account for students' achievement. The school's analysis of its strengths and weaknesses is rigorous and based on a wide range of evidence. The school produces detailed plans for its further improvement with clear targets for success. The school is aware, for example, of occasional inconsistencies in marking and in showing students how to improve their work. There are detailed plans to remedy the weaknesses.

The school's system of managing staff performance is well organised and rigorous. Teachers are fully aware that they are accountable for their students' progress; pay awards are linked to their performance. These robust systems have led to consistent improvements in teaching and achievement.

- The range of subjects in the curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of all students. The curriculum for English and mathematics is effective and has resulted in students making good progress. In Key Stage 4, a large number of GCSE courses are available and this provision is extended by a smaller number of high-quality work-related courses. A very large number of enrichment activities are offered at the end of the school day. Students have many opportunities to take part in sporting activities as well as music and drama.
- Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Students are encouraged to take responsibility in the school and to support others in the community. Many opportunities are provided for students to reflect on moral issues as well as on their own achievement. Students learn to respect those with different faiths and beliefs and develop a clear understanding of right and wrong. The British values of free speech and democracy are actively promoted through the curriculum so that students are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- High-quality careers education is introduced in Year 9 so that students can make well-informed choices about their futures. Along with their good progress this ensures students are well prepared for the next stages in their education or training.
- School leaders make good use of the additional funding to support disadvantaged students. These students benefit from one-to-one support and additional small-group teaching in English and mathematics. This support is effective so that disadvantaged students make good progress. The funding is also used to ensure that these students can participate fully in all the school's enrichment activities.
- Leaders check regularly to ensure that students' behaviour, attendance and progress at the alternative provision are good.
- The headteacher and the governing body ensure that the school rejects all forms of discrimination, fosters good relationships and promotes equality of opportunity for all its students. The school itself is a harmonious community where staff and students cooperate well together.
- Safeguarding arrangements are well organised and effective. They meet current statutory requirements.
- The school's improvement consultant has supported the school effectively in its drive to raise students' achievement and improve the quality of teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is highly effective. An external review of governance and an audit of skills have been carried out to improve governors' impact. Governors provide a good balance of challenge and support and play a full part in improving the school. They are fully involved in the life of the school and ensure that the skills of all governors are used fully in checking the quality of all aspects of the school's work.
 - Governors show a very good understanding of performance information on the achievement of students and how the school compares to others nationally. They ensure that they have regular training to enable them to carry out all parts of their role effectively. Governors closely check the use of additional funding, such as the pupil premium, and show a good knowledge of its impact. They promote links with parents and carers and work hard to enhance the reputation of the school in the wider community. Governors also ensure that pupils and staff are safe in all school activities.

- Governors have a strong role in checking and enhancing teaching and learning. They ensure that teachers' pay awards are linked to the achievement of their pupils and the whole-school targets set. Governors have supported the headteacher in tackling underperformance and in making strong staff appointments. They fully support school leaders in their constant drive for further school improvement. For example, governors visit lessons and meet with subject leaders to ensure that they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Students who were spoken to report that behaviour is usually good and that the rare incidents of poor behaviour that hinder their learning are dealt with quickly and fairly. They understand the school's behaviour code and support the system of rewards and sanctions.
- In almost all lessons, students concentrate well, showing positive attitudes and a desire to learn.
- Students show pride in their school and wear their uniform smartly. Their behaviour in corridors and the dining hall is usually calm and orderly. There is very little litter and no sign of graffiti.
- Movement around the school site is calm. Students show courtesy to each other, to staff and to visitors.
- Exclusions are very rare, confirmed by the school's records. This is because the school has developed effective systems of managing and improving students' behaviour.
- The behaviour of students who follow courses at Wyvern College is good. This is checked regularly by the school.
- Students' strong moral and social development enables them to respect others and understand the consequences of their actions. This contributes to their good behaviour.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Students say that they feel safe in all parts of the school site and that they are well looked after by staff. They feel that there is always someone they can talk to if they have a problem.
- The curriculum supports students well in learning how to stay safe. They show a good understanding of e-safety, including how to avoid unsafe websites and how to deal with inappropriate email messages.
- Students who spoke with inspectors reported that bullying is rare and that when it occurs staff deal with it quickly and effectively. They are aware of the different forms bullying can take, including racist, homophobic and cyber bullying. The school's behaviour logs support the students' views that such incidents are rare and are dealt with promptly.
- Some students train to be 'Anti-Bullying Ambassadors' and provide effective support for their peers.
- Attendance is average. The school monitors attendance closely and is working well with families to further improve it.
- The safety and well-being of students attending alternative provision are carefully monitored and their attendance is checked frequently.
- Almost all parents and carers who responded to the Parent View questionnaire consider that their children are safe, well behaved and happy in school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Senior leaders rigorously monitor all aspects of teaching and learning. Teaching is typically good or better and there has been consistent improvement over time. This was confirmed by observations of students' learning during the inspection, looking at their books, talking with students about their learning and examining records of their progress.
- The teaching of English and mathematics is good overall so that students' achieve well by the end of Year 11. An increasing proportion of students make outstanding progress, particularly in English.
- Students are enthusiastic about the teaching that they receive. They reported that teachers 'want us to do

really well' and that extra support is always available.

- Lessons are well planned and start promptly so that little learning time is lost. Teachers show good subject knowledge, have high expectations and are enthusiastic about what they are teaching.
- Generally teachers ensure students learn rapidly by providing tasks at the right level of difficulty for them. They check students' understanding frequently, for example by questioning skilfully, to make sure that all students are making good progress. However, occasionally checks on students' learning are less rigorous and work is either too easy or too difficult. This means students do not then do as well as they could.
- Most teachers mark students' work regularly and follow the school's well-designed policy. However, in a few instances marking does not provide sufficient guidance on how well students are doing and how to improve their work. Also, some teachers do not always ensure that students act upon the advice provided.
- Teachers across the school place a strong focus on the development of literacy, highlighting key words and encouraging students to use the correct technical vocabulary for the subject. Relationships between staff and students are extremely good so that students can ask questions and express their own views in confidence.
- Teaching assistants work very well with class teachers in effective partnerships. They contribute to the checking of students' progress and support the learning of disabled students and those with special educational needs.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is consistently above average. A high proportion of Year 11 students gain five or more GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics.
- All groups of students make outstanding progress in English. Progress in mathematics is good and improving.
- In most subjects students' attainment is good. The school has introduced strategies to improve standards in modern foreign languages and geography, since current achievement here is not as strong as in other subjects.
- The school uses a detailed tracking system to check the progress of each individual student and of all student groups. The results are used to provide extra support promptly for students when needed. This is contributing to improvements in students' achievement.
- The school checks the progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs regularly. As a result of well-targeted and effective support, these students make good progress from their starting points.
- The most able students make rapid progress, more rapid than this group of students nationally. As a result, the proportion of students achieving the highest GCSE grades is above average in several subjects.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding is used effectively to enable students to improve their literacy skills. This enables these students to make more progress in all their subjects.
- The progress made by disadvantaged students is equal to that of other disadvantaged students nationally. Published results for 2014 show that the attainment of disadvantaged students in English was about half a grade below that of their peers at the school but equal to that of other students nationally. In mathematics, disadvantaged students were about half a grade behind others in the school but almost a grade behind other students nationally. Final results, however, showed smaller attainment gaps in mathematics. These gaps in attainment are narrowing rapidly.
- In the past, the school has entered students early for their GCSE examinations in mathematics. There is no evidence that this policy has lowered students' final levels of achievement although it has led to lower published examination figures. The school is now entering students for GCSE examinations in English language and some science courses at the end of Year 10. The school's data show that this is supporting good achievement.
- Students who attend off-site provision make good progress in their work-related courses.

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	137827
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	453392

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	826
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martyn Jones
Headteacher	Sarah Busby
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01722 328565
Fax number	01722 421391
Email address	office@st-edmunds.eu

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