

St Edward's School

St Edward's School, Melchet Court, Sherfield English, Romsey, Hampshire SO51 6ZR

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

St Edward's School is a day and residential special school that provides care and education for boys aged between nine and 18 years who experience social, emotional and/or mental health difficulties.

The school offers weekly boarding during term-time only. Pupils are referred to the school from a variety of placing authorities across the country. The school is registered for up to 77 pupils. At the time of the inspection, 51 pupils were on roll. This included six residential pupils, two of whom stay for one or two nights a week. Residential pupils are accommodated in a single residential area.

The school is operated by a non-profit-making charitable trust, which is managed on behalf of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Clifton. It is located in a large country house with extensive grounds, providing a range of sport and leisure opportunities, workshops and a horticultural area.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, Ofsted suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 7 to 9 December 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of previous inspection: 26 June 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Residential students benefit from warm and nurturing relationships with staff. All children who stay at the residential provision make exceptional progress in the development of their personal skills and their relationships with others. Parents and carers are consistently positive in their praise of the help and care that their children receive. One parent commented that they feel 'indebted' to the school, and that the staff support the whole family. Children describe the school as an extended family and say that it is the best school that they have ever been to.

Children are at the centre of planning and their views help to shape how the school, and particularly the residential provision, are run. Children choose from a wide range of daily activities and their suggestions for other activities are welcomed by staff. The children are actively involved in the student council, where they have good opportunities to express their views and also to challenge or question senior staff. At a meeting of the council, the inspector observed students confidently raising concerns that were important to them and challenging issues such as the use of renewable energies at the school.

Arrangements for children enrolling at the school are tailored to each child, ensuring that they are not overwhelmed by their new environment. Time spent in the therapeutic provision helps the children to adapt to school life, particularly when they have been out of education for many years. The school's therapy team ensures that each child is seen as a whole person, rather than focusing solely on their educational needs. Plans are designed to enable children to become as independent as possible during their time at the school.

Highly comprehensive and detailed pre-admission assessments with children, parents and carers, and including the multi-disciplinary therapeutic team, ensure that all are aware of how the child's needs will be met. Areas for development and any concerns raised by the family are taken into account in setting initial targets and in the accompanying care plan and risk assessments. Consistency between school and care plans is fundamental to all staff understanding how to best support and develop the child's education and social skills. Staff are confident they can support the children to achieve their full potential. Many children have had significant periods out of education and have experienced numerous difficulties at previous schools. Children feel safe at the school and feel valued as individuals.

Children receive exemplary support to develop skills for independence. The opportunity to achieve ASDAN qualification in Social and Personal Development helps children to feel well motivated while learning essential life skills. Staff consistently hold in mind each child's plan and how to help them move successfully towards this, including living away from home in preparation for residential college. Children's individual plans include essential life skills such as forming relationships and

negotiating busy public places. In addition, children learn the importance of being part of a community. They engage in a range of charitable events for the local community and further afield.

Children's physical health and emotional well-being needs are particularly well understood. Staff have specific training in meeting children's health needs and the school day is arranged to allow sensory circuits and exercise for children to self-regulate. Staff help children to attend appointments when they and their parents require extra support. The school provides reports from the consultant clinical psychologist when necessary to help to secure emotional well-being services.

The emotional impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been well considered to ensure that children do not become overwhelmed. The on-site testing station means that children can be thoughtfully supported throughout the process. The testing arrangements are carefully explained to the students and lateral flow tests are carried out each week, to help to reduce the risk of COVID-19 outbreaks at the school.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Children say that they feel safe while staying at the residential provision. They have developed excellent relationships with staff and with each other. They were all able to name someone they could talk to if they were worried or upset. Some children spoke of the 'safe space' that they use when they are anxious or overwhelmed. Staff are well informed about each child's specific vulnerabilities and they do all that they can to keep children safe, including teaching them how to manage risky or frightening situations.

The designated safeguarding lead is meticulous in the reporting of concerns to children's social workers and relevant partner agencies. Records show regular communication with external agencies, as well as challenge if necessary. Social workers and the designated officer in the local authority are complimentary about the school's approach to safeguarding, recognising that even minor concerns are reported to ensure that there is a complete picture for the child. Staff are confident about how to report any safeguarding concerns. Staff, leaders and governors are all acutely aware that 'it could happen here' and make every effort to be constantly alert to safeguarding issues.

Staff recognise that children's actions and behaviour are all forms of communication. The excellent understanding of each child's emotional well-being needs through the use of cross-school plans means that responses to signs of anxiety or distress are swift. Joint working across all departments in the school means that children benefit from a consistency of approach to behaviours. Responses to socially inappropriate behaviours are clear and constructive, enabling the child to learn different coping mechanisms, and how to repair relationships with the group. Staff are keen to

actively support and develop children who may otherwise have been permanently excluded.

Staff have been successful in working with children who arrive at the school with a history of going missing or of self-injurious behaviour. The number of incidents has reduced or ceased completely while the child is at the school. Staff are alert to each child's emotional and physical presentation and implement the planned therapeutic approaches effectively. Children are diverted into positive actions and helped to develop interests in other areas. Children are encouraged to take age-appropriate risk as part of healthy development, including motorcycling on the school's track.

Children's online safety is managed well through a variety of educational means across the school. Any relevant issues that happen at home in relation to social media are swiftly resolved in school. Any incidents of bullying are well managed within the school. Children are confident in raising concerns if they feel that they or another child is being singled out or picked on. Children say that they know that staff will manage any issues and that they feel safe reporting concerns.

Children are protected from avoidable risks through the diligence of the site management and maintenance teams. Safer recruitment processes go above the minimum required by guidance, including seeking extra references and assurances from former employers.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Children benefit from a consistent and experienced residential staff team. Staff are committed to meeting each child's individual needs. Care staff working across the school day means that all children, including day students, benefit from extra nurture and pastoral support.

Leaders and managers are highly aspirational for the children in the school. They believe that all children can, and will, succeed to the best of their abilities. Through strong modelling, staff across the school show they share this passion and enthusiasm and are equally ambitious for children's success.

Staff are extremely complimentary about the head of pastoral care and other senior staff in the school, who create a culture where everyone is part of the team providing bespoke support for children. Staff have good access to more senior staff, noting that senior staff listen to them and to their ideas. There is a real sense that all roles in the school are of equal value; staff well-being sessions have been made available to all staff, including domestic staff, recognising that everyone has a role to play in supporting children.

Training for staff is wide-ranging and of high quality. This includes a bespoke training package from a local university. Training is grounded in attachment theory, and coordination with the therapies team and the consultant clinical psychologist ensure that all aspects of children's needs are included within the training calendar.

Governors bring a wealth of experience from a variety of backgrounds and provide highly effective and critical oversight of the management of the school. They confidently challenge the leadership team and comment that senior leaders are very receptive to new ideas and approaches. External scrutiny by governors has been a challenge during the COVID-19 restrictions. However, governors have ensured that the residential accommodation is visited regularly. The level of insight and scrutiny through the reports from these visits is of a particularly high standard. The residential management team responds quickly to any recommendations in the reports, showing a constant desire to improve the service provided. Some parents have commented to inspectors that they would like more information from staff about their child's well-being and progress at the end of each week.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Recommendation

- Staff must follow school policies on the frequency with which parents and carers are contacted with updates on children's stays.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Residential special school details

Social care unique reference number: SC012014

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mr G Maher

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector

Jennie Christopher, Social Care Inspector

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