

Inspection of St Edward's School

Melchet Court, Sherfield English, Romsey, Hampshire SO51 6ZR

Inspection dates: 23 to 25 November 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Outstanding**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish at St Edward's School because leaders and staff support pupils exceptionally well. Pupils settle quickly because of the highly effective induction programme provided at 'The Bridge' when they first join the school. Staff help pupils to understand the expected behaviours so that they can concentrate on their learning. They calmly and quickly provide support when a pupil needs extra help to regulate themselves. Pupils say that bullying happens rarely. Staff are swift to address any concerns or friendship worries.

Leaders support pupils equally strongly with their academic learning. They are ambitious for every pupil. Staff build positive relationships with pupils which inspires them to develop confidence and independence. Pupils value their education and the support that staff provide. Consequently, they work hard. Parents appreciate the care their children receive. As one parent commented, 'St Edward's is more like an extended family for my boy.'

Leaders empower pupils to make a positive difference to others. Pupils support the local and global community through a range of activities such as making food hampers for local families in need. The school council appreciate how leaders listen and act on their suggestions to further improve the school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have strengthened many aspects of the school's work in the last two years. They have prioritised training for staff so they accurately understand pupils' needs. Consequently, pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs are met exceptionally well. Leaders have developed bespoke support, including therapies, for pupils which are thoroughly reviewed and adapted as their needs change over time. Staff closely check the progress that pupils make against their targets in their education, health and care plans. They weave therapeutic sessions and academic learning together highly effectively so that pupils are supported to achieve strongly.

Pupils behave with high levels of respect and self-regulation. Staff model positive and warm relationships. They have highly consistent expectations to which pupils respond well. This contributes to the calm and positive atmosphere in the school. In lessons, pupils work in small groups which enables staff to identify any anxiety and swiftly address this. Pupils are supported well to develop independent strategies to regulate themselves.

Leaders place great importance on helping pupils to learn to read. This is a priority as soon as pupils join the school. Staff have been trained so they have the expert knowledge to teach early reading. Weaker readers receive effective extra support to help them to catch up. These pupils are given books that are accurately matched to the sounds they have learned. This helps them to build confidence and fluency so that they are able to read increasingly challenging texts across the curriculum. Staff

foster an enjoyment of books by reading stories aloud. This includes books that promote diversity to reflect the school's inclusive ethos.

The curriculum is rich and carefully matched to pupils' needs and aspirations. In most subjects, leaders have set out precisely what they intend pupils to learn and in what order, including key vocabulary. This helps pupils to gradually build on what they have learned before so they are well-prepared for their next stage in learning. Leaders are currently refining the curriculum for relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education.

Staff have strong subject knowledge, and this enables them to carefully explain new content taking account of the needs of individual pupils. Teachers skilfully use assessment to identify pupils' gaps in learning and prioritise the most important content for them to study. Leaders have deliberately created calm classroom environments and staff use effective resources which support pupils to maintain their self-regulation.

Staff are ambitious for pupils to be well prepared for their lives beyond St Edward's. Leaders are committed to supporting pupils from an early age to consider a range of careers and take the next steps towards education, employment or training, including meeting different providers to inform their future plans. There are a few pupils who stay on into the sixth form and they follow a bespoke curriculum. This includes attending work experience or following courses at other colleges with the support of adults from St Edward's.

Leaders' excellent work to promote personal development builds pupils' sense of belonging. The daily 'Thought for the day' is used by staff to model positive attitudes for the whole school community. Equality and diversity are central to the school's work. Pupils are taught that everyone is welcome at St Edward's and differences are celebrated. All pupils appreciate the wide range of engaging activities on offer such as riding motorbikes, fishing in the school lake and surfing in Devon. These experiences make pupils keen to attend. As one pupil commented, 'This is the best school I have ever been to.'

Proprietors have a good understanding of the school's strengths. They also make sure that equality policies are in place and are well promoted. There is less scrutiny on ensuring there is a systematic approach to checking the independent school standards. Consequently, minor adjustments needed to be made at the beginning of the inspection. The independent school standards nevertheless are met. Proprietors and leaders work constructively with staff to consider their workload. As a result, staff feel valued and are proud to work at St Edward's School.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have published a suitable safeguarding policy on the school website. This follows guidelines closely. They provide high-quality training to ensure that staff

understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Staff know that pupils' additional needs could make them more vulnerable, so they report even the smallest concern promptly. When a concern is raised, leaders take robust action to ensure that pupils get the help they need to keep them safe from potential harm.

Leaders ensure that safer recruitment procedures are followed. This includes making sure that the required checks are completed before adults start working at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and the proprietor)

- The curriculum for RSE and health education is currently being refined. This means that staff do not build on previous learning as well as they do in the rest of the curriculum so pupils' learning is more variable. Leaders should ensure that staff have secure knowledge of how pupils' learning is intended to build up over time
- The proprietors do not have sufficiently strong oversight of the independent school standards. This means they do not know how well each standard is met. The proprietors should strengthen their work to hold leaders to account by sharply focusing on the independent school standards.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	116584
DfE registration number	850/6032
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10243445
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	9 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	61
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Clifton Catholic Diocesan Trust
Chair	Michael Tennant
Headteacher	Graham Maher
Annual fees (day pupils)	£85,896
Telephone number	01794 885252
Website	www.melchetcourt.com
Email address	admin@melchetcourt.com
Date of previous inspection	5 to 7 June 2018

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there has been a change in the leadership of the school. The current headteacher took up his post in April 2020.
- St Edward's School is an independent special school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Many pupils have missed a significant amount of time in school previously.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met with members of the proprietor body, including the chair of the board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and RSE and health education. This involved discussions with the leaders of these subjects, reviewing curriculum plans, visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work and talking with pupils and staff about learning in these subjects. The lead inspector also heard some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also explored the wider curriculum in the school by speaking to leaders about the provision for pupils' special educational needs and personal development.
- The inspectors reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising safeguarding records, interviewing staff and through discussions with pupils.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents shared through the Ofsted surveys. They gathered the views of pupils and staff through surveys, interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.
- To check compliance with the independent school standards, inspectors toured the school site and completed a document review.

Inspection team

Laurie Anderson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lucy English

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
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