

# St Edward's School

St Edwards 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 residential pupils. At the time of the inspection, 63 pupils were on roll. This included five residential pupils, one of whom stays for one night 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 inspector only inspected the social care provision at this school.

### Inspection dates: 17 to 19 January 2023

**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:** 7 December 2021

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

Children make exceptional progress while staying at the school. Their warm and nurturing relationships with staff help them to feel confident in their surroundings. Children are relaxed in residential and genuinely treat it like their second home. Children describe the school as being like another home, with one child talking about 'living' there. Children's family members and social workers are extremely positive about the help and support children receive while staying at the school, including the continued help for those children who are currently unable to stay overnight.

Children's views are at the centre of planning, not only regarding the evening activities but the rooms they stay in, the meals that are served and how the school is run. Children are active in regular residential meetings and have representation on the student council. Children take this opportunity to raise their ideas and learn how to appropriately challenge senior staff. Children are confident when talking to staff and the inspector and felt able to raise issues that were important to them – particularly the comfort and size of the beds. Children were seen asking about why they had not been on certain activities, and staff were able to provide suitable responses and reminders of decisions that may have already been made. The wide range of activities allow children to take part in age-appropriate activities and the school is not risk averse. Some children are able to stay later in the evening and have enrichment activities to improve relationship skills.

Children who are joining the residential provision enjoy bespoke transitions that meet their needs. This ensures that children are introduced to the new routines at a pace they can manage. Time spent in 'The Bridge', the school's therapeutic provision, provides excellent support for children who are new to the school. Staff focus on children's emotional well-being and ability to adapt to new environments. This also supports children who may be anxious in the classroom environment, particularly if they have been out of school for a significant time.

Information about new children and those already attending the school is shared effectively through daily meetings and briefings. Staff share how well children are managing their day, but also where there may be concerns. Children have 'passports' that are shared with all staff across the school, to provide consistency in approach to the child as a whole person, not just educationally. This means that children excel in developing social skills and independence in preparation for their next steps into adulthood. Children learn how to live with other people, make choices and consider what others would like to do, in addition to learning to manage in a school environment that can, at times, be busy and noisy. Of particular note is the way in which children learn to support others in residential, recognising that they are all different and understanding that they like to do different things. Children learn the importance of giving back to the community through raising money for charities, as well as taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

Children learn the importance of healthy lifestyles and what this means for them. Children's physical and emotional health needs are considered in all aspects of the school day. Children take part in specific sensory activities at the start of the school day; self-regulating and readying themselves for learning. Those who have struggled to use school transport will be collected by staff, no matter the distance. This is a demonstration of staff understanding the child's needs, as well as a recognition of how important school structure is for children emotionally. Staff have specific training in meeting children's health needs, and they help children to attend health appointments when they need that extra support. Children's emotional well-being is held central to all plans. The Consultant Clinical Psychologist helps to formulate plans for children while providing invaluable guidance to the therapy team and parents and carers.

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

Children say that they feel safe while staying at the residential provision. Their actions and demeanour show that they are comfortable and confident in their interactions with staff and each other. Children all identify someone they could go to if they needed help, or were worried or upset. Staff are attuned to each child's needs and do all they can to keep them safe, while teaching them how to keep themselves safe.

The approach to safeguarding and child protection is embedded throughout the staff team. Staff talk confidently about how to respond to any concern and demonstrate an acute understating of each child's vulnerabilities. Staff are open in their consideration that 'it could happen here' and recognise the risk of closed cultures within the school environment. The designated safeguarding lead instils the importance of sharing concerns to the whole school, and the recent addition of an online reporting system has further bolstered the reporting process. Concerns are immediately reported to safeguarding partners and social workers, and meticulous records show the significant amount of work and interventions carried out to ensure that children's safeguarding needs are met, with appropriate challenge where necessary.

Social workers commented on the high-quality responses in that the school responds to, and records concerns very well, but also provides a 'safe space' for children who have experienced difficult emotional health and well-being challenges. Despite the school currently not being able to offer overnight stays to one particular child, there is a sensitive approach to allowing the child to stay into the evenings so that they can continue to have time with friends and staff is exemplary.

There is a significant amount of education, support and guidance around children's safety while accessing social media, as this is recognised as a key issue in the school. Staff reconcile children who may have fallen out over the weekend. Bullying is challenged swiftly, educating all involved, while the children's social understanding

and their additional needs, regarding their speech and language, are recognised. There have been delays in updating the school's policy in relation to online safety, but this has not impacted on the quality of staff's understanding, or children's safety and ongoing education in this area.

Staff recognise that all children's actions and behaviour are forms of communication. The whole-school approach to understanding each child's needs means that there are consistent approaches to children when they are anxious or distressed. Children know what is expected of them in certain situations throughout the day, and this predictability means that they are better able to express if they are feeling upset or worried. Staff respond consistently and children are helped to cope, and they have people they can go to in times of emotional crisis. Children learn how to respond to peers who may be struggling. They also learn strategies to care for themselves if the actions of others are upsetting them.

Children are protected from avoidable risks as a result of the staff's proactive approach to maintenance, and engaging children in fire evacuation drills. Children are able to take age-appropriate, well-managed risks through activities such as using the school's motorbike track. The school's approach to this is well considered and not risk averse. Safer recruitment processes are a particular strength and exceed the minimum standards required, including seeking extra references and checking suitability with former employers.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

Leaders and managers have extremely high aspirations for all children in the school. They instil this in the committed and enthusiastic staff team, and all staff believe children will achieve their full potential. This permeates through the school and children, who have not always had positive experiences in other schools. Children start to believe in themselves.

Leaders and managers are constantly looking at how they can improve and maintain an outstanding provision for children. They take on board ideas and suggestions from partner agencies and use inspection activity as a learning and development tool. Evaluation of the residential provision's role within the school is critical, ambitious and complements the main school's evaluation. The consistent and experienced residential staff team also works across the school in other roles, making sure there is not only consistency for children but also a whole-school approach to meeting children's needs and helping them flourish.

Staff are well supported by a highly experienced head of pastoral care who motivates the staff. Staff are keen to improve and develop. They talk positively about the head of pastoral care's influence on the practice in the school and about how accessible senior leaders are. Staff say that they are listened to and able to share their ideas in what is a genuinely collaborative approach to meeting children's needs. Staff benefit from bespoke training to meet children's changing needs, with a focus on the impact of attachment and trauma. Staff have regular, reflective supervision, which reviews

their progress against their appraisal. While staff can talk openly about what they have learned through training, there is currently no formal evaluation of what staff have learned, particularly from undertaking online courses.

The school governors are visible in the residential provision, visiting regularly. They bring a wealth of experience from education and business. They are highly critical and evaluative regarding the school, and they feel that senior leaders are welcoming of their oversight. The leadership team has responded swiftly to the changes in the national minimum standards and they have adapted external monitoring and scrutiny of the residential provision. The head of care responds quickly to any observations of areas for development.

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

### **Points for improvement**

- Leaders and managers should assess and record staff's understanding of training they have undertaken.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that the online safety policy is regularly reviewed.

### **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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