

Inspection of William Edwards School

Stifford Clays Road, Stifford Clays, Grays, Essex RM16 3NJ

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Simon Bell. This school is part of South West Essex Community Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Stephen Munday, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Viv Northall. Simon Bell is also the executive headteacher of one other school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils at William Edwards feel part of the school community and see positive changes happening in the school, such as improving behaviour at social times. They feel that the school supports them and that, if they have a concern, they will be taken seriously. Pupils rarely experience unkind language. Pupils are safe here.

In some lessons, the expectations of staff are not always high enough. The work pupils are asked to do does not always challenge them. Pupils are not always sure about what they have learned. They struggle to remember important information. Some pupils do not take pride in their work. The quality of the work they produce is not high. This is too often not addressed by their teachers.

Some pupils do not always behave well. In some classes, pupils are not able to work hard and concentrate because their learning is interrupted by poor behaviour. This disruption is not always challenged, so it continues.

There are opportunities for pupils to develop character outside the classroom. The school is proud of its large Duke of Edinburgh's Award cohort. The school also offers a range of extra-curricular activities and visits and trips abroad. Pupils can also have input into the life of the school through leadership opportunities, including taking on the role of sports leader.

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

The quality of education at the school is not yet good because the curriculum in some subjects does not sufficiently challenge pupils. It lacks ambition. In some subjects, the work given to pupils is too simplistic for their age, and the resources they are provided with do not support their learning. Pupils do not always understand how well they are doing because the way they are assessed is not effective. The feedback they receive on their work, for example through whole-class comments, is not valued or acted on by the pupils. In some subjects, where there is a defined and rigorous approach to assessing pupils' knowledge, progress is better.

While there is a focus on reading, this is not yet sufficiently rigorous to ensure that the weakest readers make rapid progress. Leaders are taking action to address this.

The identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is effective. Teachers know their pupils well and are provided with appropriate information in relation to their needs. The needs of pupils with SEND are typically met in class. SEND provision is monitored closely.

Social times are calm. Pupils chat happily with their friends. Some pupils comment that this atmosphere is because the school has recently changed its policy on mobile phones; they speak about this positively. However, behaviour in lessons is too often not good. Pupils' attitudes towards their learning are not always appropriate because the school's action to address this has not yet been sufficient. Pupils are not always

respectful to staff or one another in lessons. This creates a challenging environment that has a significant impact on learning in some lessons. Where the school's policy on behaviour is applied effectively, behaviour is better. However, all too often this is not consistent.

The school has worked hard to ensure that pupils attend regularly. High attendance is valued and rewarded. This has extended to changing school bus routes to enable pupils to attend more easily. As a result, attendance is above national average. Pupils arrive at school and lessons on time.

Pupils learn an appropriate programme of personal, social and health education. Most pupils can explain how they can keep themselves healthy and safe. The programme includes independent advice on career opportunities and choices. Many pupils are actively involved in the wider life of the school. A high proportion of disadvantaged pupils participate in extra-curricular activities.

Leaders are fiercely ambitious for the school. They have a clear vision of what they want to achieve. Leaders recognise the inconsistency in the school and are determined to ensure that all pupils receive the highest-quality education. However, the impact of leaders' actions to date has yet to be fully realised. The school faces many challenges such as significant issues with the recruitment and retention of staff.

The school engages well with its community. Staff are proud to work at William Edwards and they recognise that the school is supportive of their well-being and workload. Parents are beginning to come on board, and most would recommend the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Work given to pupils does not always enable them to achieve the aims of the curriculum. As a result, they do not make the progress they should. The school must ensure that teaching approaches and tasks provided are designed to help pupils remember and understand the curriculum.
- Assessment is not always used well. Understanding is not checked systematically, and pupils' misconceptions are not always addressed. As a result, teachers do not identify when pupils do not understand their work. The way in which assessment is used should be reviewed thoroughly to significantly improve the consistency and impact of the approach.
- The behaviour of pupils in some lessons is not appropriate because the school's behaviour policy is not implemented consistently. Poor behaviour in some classes

causes learning to be disrupted frequently. The school must ensure that the new behaviour policy is applied consistently and rigorously in all classes.

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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	137214
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	10268150
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,225
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Viv Northall
CEO of the trust	Stephen Munday
Headteacher	Simon Bell
Website	williamedwards.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	1 and 2 May 2019

Information about this school

- The school is part of South West Essex Community Education Trust.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspection team met with representatives of the trust, including trustees and the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, science and art. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An additional curriculum review was undertaken in history at the request of school leaders.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspection team met with pupils from different year groups to talk about their learning and experiences at school. The inspection team also considered the 122 responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents provided by the school. These included the school improvement plan, curriculum documentation and school policies.
- Inspectors considered 37 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and carers, Ofsted Parent View. This included 26 comments from parents in the free-text facility. Inspectors also considered the 80 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Jonathan Rockey, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Claire Robins	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Fowler	Ofsted Inspector
Cathy Barr	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Sutton	Ofsted Inspector

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