

St Edward's Royal Free Ecumenical Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110086
Local Authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	288586
Inspection dates	22–23 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Maria Dawes HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	359
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Derek Moss
Headteacher	Mr Rod Welsh
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2002
School address	Parsonage Lane Windsor SL4 5EN
Telephone number	01753 867809
Fax number	01753 869001

Age group	9–13
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Edward's Royal Free Ecumenical School is a voluntary aided (Church of England and Roman Catholic) middle school serving the town of Windsor and the surrounding villages. Most pupils come from relatively affluent backgrounds although there are some pockets of deprivation. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above the national average but very few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning disabilities and difficulties is around the national average although the school has more than double the national proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Edward's Royal Free puts 'learning together' at the heart of its work and successfully provides a caring Christian environment in which each child is valued. It is a satisfactory school with many strong features. Staff work very effectively together to promote a climate which inspires pupils to respond positively to the many opportunities available. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are proud of it. In particular they appreciate the excellent relationships between staff and pupils which contribute to very good attitudes both in lessons and around the school; as one pupil commented 'You can trust the teachers.' The bright, welcoming and attractive school building and general atmosphere convey the school's ethos of developing both pupils' and staff self-worth.

In the four years they are at St Edward's Royal Free pupils make satisfactory progress. In some subjects, in particular science and mathematics, pupils make good progress and leave school at the end of Year 8 with standards higher than those expected for their age. Improvements in teaching are now leading to better progress in English and results at the end of Year 6 national tests in 2006 were higher than previously. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall although much is good. However there is a lack of consistency between and within subjects and the school has been working hard to improve this through monitoring, staff training and support. It correctly identifies this as an ongoing priority in order to bring all teaching to the level of the best.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good with some outstanding features. The good curriculum and excellent care offered by the school supports this. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular activities that are enthusiastically supported ranging from 'Dr Who Club' to 'Masterchef' as well as many sporting and art activities. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to both the school and local community and support a wide range of charities. Pupils of all ages are encouraged to take up positions of responsibility from prefects to the school council, which recently visited the Houses of Parliament.

The school has very good links with other local middle schools, their feeder schools and the two upper schools. These ensure that there is continuity in curriculum and support for pupils. One parent commented that 'St Edward's Royal Free did a fantastic job in handling the transition from the sheltered environment of his first school to the challenging environment of a middle school.' Systems for offering academic advice are developing well although not yet embedded. The vast majority of parents have a positive view of the school and the school is consistently oversubscribed.

Leadership and management are good. The leadership team have a clear vision of enabling all pupils to achieve beyond expectations within a caring, respectful and happy community. This is shared by all staff and governors. Staff feel well supported and appreciate the culture of openness that exists at all levels. One teacher commented, 'the head is really interested in everything and everyone'. School self-evaluation is accurate and the leadership of the school has a clear focus on raising the level of achievement of all pupils. Senior leaders have put in place appropriate actions which are already bringing about improvements particularly in pupils' achievement and in teaching and learning. However they have not yet set in place rigorous success criteria or interim reviews by which they will judge the success of their actions. The governors are supportive yet challenging and hold the school to account. The school shows good capacity to bring about improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure further improvement to the quality of teaching and learning in order to raise levels of achievement across all subjects.
- Extend school improvement planning at all levels to include clear success criteria and milestones against which to judge school progress.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' attainment on entry to St Edward's Royal Free, based on the tests taken in Year 2, is broadly average. Pupils make satisfactory progress through Years 5 and 6 and by the time they take the end of Key Stage 2 national tests their standards remain broadly average. Pupils do better in mathematics and science than in English and science results have been above average for the past 5 years. English results have been improving due to recent improved leadership and teaching. In all three core subjects a higher than national proportion of pupils attain the higher levels.

Progress in Years 7 and 8 is satisfactory although there are variations between subjects. Pupils make good progress in mathematics and science and, by the time they leave school, their standards are above average. Progress is satisfactory in English and showing evidence of improvement. Standards in reading are higher than that in writing. In foundation subjects the school's assessments and tracking systems shows that standards and achievement vary between subjects. By the end of Year 8 pupils make good progress in art, design technology and physical education but standards achieved in information and communication technology (ICT) are below that expected for their age.

Because the school pays close attention to the specific needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or with English as a second language, there is no discernible difference in the progress these pupils make compared with others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well being are good with outstanding features. Opportunities for reflection, prayer and awe and wonder abound through assemblies, tutor time, displays and curriculum opportunities. This leads to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The ecumenical character of the school is strongly reflected through frequent events and activities and pupils place emphasis on this. A strong and varied extra-curricular sports programme along with healthy food provision has enabled pupils to adopt exemplary healthy lifestyles. This has contributed to the school achieving the Healthy Schools Award. Pupil behaviour around the school and in classrooms is very good and this ensures that they engage in safe practices. Pupils say there is very little bullying and this adds to their very good sense of well-being.

Pupils enjoy learning and this is reflected in their positive attitudes and good attendance through the year. Their willingness to take responsibility readily is outstanding and they do so through a range of opportunities to contribute to their community. Pupils are involved in being

members of the school council, library monitors, prefect system, sports leaders and much more. In an after school 'Mini Olympics' session for feeder schools, Year 7 and 8 gifted and talented pupils were seen responsibly and actively engaged in supporting and coaching the younger children during the athletic events. Year 8 students also help in the induction of Year 5 when they first join the school, and throughout the year, through reading support programmes. Pupils also readily contribute to fund raising activities for numerous charities. Pupils experience aspects of enterprise education helping them to prepare for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Many of the lessons seen were good or better but not enough are yet of this standard. The school has an accurate view of teaching and learning. However, lesson monitoring does not always evaluate learning with the same rigour as teaching.

The good relationships pupils have with teachers and teaching assistants contribute to their positive attitudes to learning. Teachers are highly knowledgeable and pupils benefit from having subject specialists teach them. They carefully plan structured lessons and often use an imaginative range of activities to engage and enthuse pupils. In an outstanding English revision lesson the teacher involved pupils in a piece of secret writing before challenging their neighbours to work out the purpose, audience and form of the writing. This activity encouraged the pupils to assess their neighbour's work and give peer feedback leading to enhanced levels of learning.

In many lessons however pupils are not given the opportunities to become independent learners, posing their own questions and setting up or following their own lines of enquiry. This is because teachers dominate discussions and place too much emphasis on class activities. Teachers are beginning to use the available data to track pupils' progress in their subject. However, they are not yet using it well enough in planning activities and support to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. This leads to pupils not always making the appropriate learning gains. In many classes pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve and can talk about their specific learning targets. Marking is focused and encourages pupils to build upon their good work and learn from their mistakes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Curriculum provision is good because it provides a broad and balanced range of learning opportunities for all pupils and meets statutory requirements. Setting from Year 5 in some subjects allows effective provision to be focused on meeting the needs of different groups of pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties are well catered for and a good range of additional support both in and out of class ensures that they make similar progress to their peers. Provision for the most able pupils is also good with pupils being offered an additional range of activities including, for example, summer schools and an exciting and challenging Romeo and Juliet showcase.

The curriculum is enriched by a diverse and extensive range of extra-curricular provision, especially sporting and creative art activities. Pupils are actively encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities and almost all do so adding considerable enjoyment to their school

experience. Pupils participate in a wide variety of day trips and longer residential trips often leading to significant increases in pupil motivation.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care guidance and support for pupils is good. Transfer arrangements to and from the school are well established and help to make pupils feel comfortable and safe in their new environments as well as ensuring curriculum continuity. Staff know their pupils well and any concerns are identified early enabling effective support to be put in place. Pupils, parents and carers have great confidence in the school. Pupils feel safe and say they have someone to turn to if they have a problem. Positive guidance encouraging pupils to lead healthy and safe lives comes through curriculum topics, citizenship and personal, social and health education programmes. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are appropriate and well established.

The recently introduced system for target setting is good. Targets are challenging and teachers provide good guidance through verbal and written feedback to help pupils make progress. Pupils know their levels and what they need to do to improve them. Effective means of identifying and meeting the needs for those with learning difficulties and disabilities and the gifted and talented are in place. This is done through making full use of school, local authority and other agencies for additional expertise.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and his dynamic senior management team have a clear vision for the school focusing on raising pupils' standards of attainment whilst maintaining the well-established Christian and caring ethos of the school. Throughout the school there is now a culture for improving teaching and learning. This is characterised by open communication and respect between staff, which is conducive to driving further improvements.

The school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses through systematic monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school's provision. This has included taking into account the views of parents and pupils. Leaders and managers have identified relevant actions for improvement but lack measurable success criteria that will allow them to judge the impact of their changes over time. The school has focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning and put in place a variety of strategies and support from targeted coaching to whole school development. Evidence shows that this is paying dividends and beginning to impact on improved pupil outcomes.

The senior leadership team have successfully prioritised the strengthening of leadership and management at all levels. Middle managers contribute to school self-evaluation and are held accountable for their areas of responsibility. Subject leaders, are now using data more effectively to evaluate pupils' progress and to target support for those who are underachieving. The school's resources are used effectively and efficiently and staff and pupils appreciate the facilities available. Governance is good, offering critical support and holding the school to account.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

8 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Edward's Royal Free Ecumenical Middle School, Windsor, SL4 5EN

I am writing on behalf of the other inspectors and myself to thank you for the warm welcome and help you gave us when we visited your school. We very much enjoyed meeting you and listening to what you had to say about your school. We hope that you take the time to look at the full report but we thought you would like a summary of our findings.

You told us that your school was a welcoming and caring place in which to learn and play and that you particularly appreciated the good relationships you had with your teachers. We agree with you. We have judged your school to provide you with a satisfactory standard of education with many good and some outstanding aspects. We also believe the school has good potential to become better and improvements are already happening under the strong leadership of your headteacher.

You have a lovely school building with good facilities and vibrant displays that you appreciate and are rightly proud of. All of the staff (not just the teachers) look after you very well and make you feel happy and safe. We were very impressed by all the activities you engage with and in particular how many of you get involved in a PE club which really contributes to your very healthy lifestyles. More importantly, we were also impressed by how well you treat each other and how almost all of you turn up to lessons eager to learn. We saw a lot of good teaching but we think that some could be even better. Your teachers have been working to improve this and we have asked them to continue to do so in order to enable you to make more progress. You can help in this by asking more questions and taking more responsibility in your own learning.

In order to monitor how well the school is doing we have asked your headteacher and the teachers to set clear targets for themselves and check up on these on a regular basis - rather like they do with your progress!

Thank you again for helping us with our work. We will remember St Edward's Royal Free as a warm, happy and exciting place to be. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Maria Dawes

Her Majesty's Inspector