

St Edward's CofE(VA) Junior High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124458
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	340576
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Deborah James

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 of pupils on the school roll	748
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Matthew Parker
Headteacher	John Kime
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors who visited 37 lessons, observed 34 teachers and held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and a small group of governors. They observed the school's work and studied a range of documentation, including the school's development plan, minutes of governing body meetings, departmental monitoring evidence and records of pupils' progress. Inspectors also reviewed responses to questionnaires returned from pupils, staff and 350 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress made by pupils at Key Stage 2
- the evidence held by the school to support their evaluation that all pupils are making good progress by the end of Year 8
- the effectiveness of the school's actions in improving the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in English.

Information about the school

This middle school is larger than average and the majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The entitlement to free school meals is also below average. The school is a partner in the West Leek Federation. The school has achieved a range of national awards including, most recently, the International School Award, Eco School Status and the Healthy School Award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

St Edward's is an inclusive caring school where individual pupils are supported well in developing strong moral values, self-confidence and consideration for others. As a result, pupils are able to make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community. Pupils have excellent attendance and punctuality and participate enthusiastically in the life of the school through a well-established school council. Older pupils act as 'buddies' for younger pupils and provide support for them on a reading programme and with issues like bullying. Pupils are keen to participate in community activities and provide support in a local first school. Pupils are very proud of their school. 'It's pretty perfect the way it is' was the response from one pupil when asked what could be done to improve the school.

Changes to the curriculum for year 8 pupils have made a significant contribution to their motivation, enabling them to have greater success and find relevance in their learning. The majority of pupils participate enthusiastically in a broad range of curriculum enrichment opportunities that include sports, languages and a particularly popular Grow It, Cook It, Eat It course.

By the end of Year 8 pupils reach standards that are broadly in line with national attainment. Pupils are more successful in mathematics, attaining results that are above the national average. Pupils' progress in Years 5 and 6 is only satisfactory, partly as a result of a lack of clarity over starting points, but by Year 7 and 8 pupils are making good progress. By the time pupils move to high school the great majority have made better than expected progress and are well prepared for the transition to GCSE courses. Although the majority of teaching is good, some teaching remains satisfactory and as a result pupils are not always supported consistently to make good progress. Pupils learn best when teachers' expectations are clear and they engage with challenging tasks that interest and motivate them. The most skilful teachers listen well and use effective questioning to check and extend individual pupil learning. This was particularly evident in mathematics lessons where teachers took the time to explore misconceptions and ensure that pupils were equipped with the skills to find solutions to mathematical problems. Teaching in English has improved since the last inspection and inspectors found several examples of creative collaborative activities that engaged and motivated pupils and led to good progress. In less-effective lessons teachers talk for too long, limiting opportunities for pupils to practise and develop new skills and slowing the pace of learning. The quality of marking and feedback is inconsistent with a significant amount of marking that is brief and infrequent. The most effective marking gives pupils clear written information about what they have achieved and how they can improve.

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Governors have a strong commitment to the highly inclusive school ethos. They have a good understanding of the school and use this well to support and challenge. The capacity of the school's leadership team has been strengthened by the recruitment of new senior leaders and the restructuring of management roles and responsibilities. Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's current strengths and what needs to be done to bring about improvement. The school has sustained the good pupil outcomes seen at the last inspection and continued to ensure provision in teaching, curriculum and care guidance and support is at least good. However, actions to bring about further improvement to some areas of the school's practice have not always been implemented with enough urgency and rigour. In particular this applies to the school's approach to reducing the variation in the quality of teaching, marking, the use of assessment data and department self evaluation. Accordingly, these actions have had limited impact on further improving pupils' achievement. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is therefore satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to support the good progress of all learners, so that by April 2011 at least 70% of teaching is good or better and 15% is outstanding, by:
 - sharing the good and outstanding practice that already exists in the school
 - strengthening teachers' questioning techniques so that they are better able to monitor and extend pupils' learning
 - ensuring that planning in all lessons meets the needs of the full ability range of pupils within the class
 - ensuring that all pupils receive regular feedback on their work through good quality marking so that they know how well they are doing and how to improve on their current performance.
- Build the school's leadership capacity by developing leadership at all levels. In particular:
 - share the good practice of the most effective middle leaders so that all are as good as in the best departments in the school
 - increase the rigour and consistency of both whole-school and departmental systems for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school's work
 - monitor the impact of actions taken to improve outcomes for pupils and make better use of this information in planning improvement
 - make better use of assessment information so that areas of underperformance are picked up quickly and appropriate interventions are introduced promptly.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Most pupils enjoy their learning and make good progress. They are keen to learn and

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participate enthusiastically in lessons. Pupils respond quickly to instructions and take responsibility for their own behaviour, particularly in group work. They collaborate very well in lessons and in other activities, demonstrating that they have positive relationships and mature attitudes towards each other and staff. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of additional support and intervention, both in and out of the classroom. There is little difference in the current attainment of boys and girls; an earlier dip in boys' attainment was addressed through changes to the curriculum and teaching strategies.

Pupils are polite and welcoming and keen to talk about what they are doing. Their mature and thoughtful conduct in lessons and around the building contributes to a calm and purposeful atmosphere that is immediately evident on entering the school. Pupils feel safe at school. They are supported very effectively in making the right choices and developing positive and confident attitudes to learning and life. Pupils develop a good understanding of the world of work both through a regular personal, social, health and economic education programme and through specific projects in their curriculum areas. For example, Year 8 pupils were highly motivated by, and developed their literacy and enterprise skills through, a 'dragons den' project in English. The school provides an extensive range of activities which enable pupils to develop a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle in terms of diet, physical activity and emotional health. However, a small number of pupils still need to take more responsibility for adopting a healthy lifestyle. Pupils' spiritual development is well supported by opportunities for reflection in regular assemblies and in lessons. Pupils have written their own school prayer and enthusiastically lead and participate in a range of charitable fundraising opportunities. There are very good opportunities for pupils to celebrate their cultural heritage and broaden their cultural experience through contact with visiting speakers and musicians. Pupils are encouraged to reflect upon and explore controversial issues and different beliefs.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Lessons are well planned and make good use of a range of interesting and motivational activities, providing the pupils with the skills and confidence to work more independently. Teachers make effective use of information and communication technology (ICT), for example by using interactive whiteboards to enthuse, motivate and promote discussion, and by encouraging pupils to use computers for research, analysis or expression of ideas. Pupils learn well when teachers respond to their needs and adjust planning to accelerate or revisit coverage of ideas. However, there is limited evidence of skilful questioning that stretches and challenges pupils. As a result some opportunities for faster progress are missed. Where teaching is satisfactory, opportunities for pupils to actively participate in learning were limited and extended periods of teacher talk slowed the pace of learning. Tasks were too often set for the whole class and not matched to the needs of individual pupils. The school uses an effective tracking system that monitors pupils' progress against suitably challenging targets. However, there was a lack of urgency in introducing appropriate intervention strategies to support pupils who are not making good progress. The majority of pupils are aware of their current performance and their target grades. In some lessons these are used effectively and pupils are clear on how they can improve their work and make further progress but this is not applied consistently across the school.

The curriculum is well organised, providing learners with a wide range of opportunities and memorable experiences including theatre trips, visits abroad and outdoor education opportunities. Key Stage 2 is broad and balanced, with a core of English, mathematics, science and ICT supported by the foundation subjects including modern languages from Year 5. At Key Stage 3 breadth and balance is maintained, with pupils completing the entire programme of study in two rather than three years. This maintains interest and provides an appropriate level of challenge for the pupils. The school has been innovative in the development of a curriculum enrichment programme that has been introduced for Year 8. Pupils are able to choose three areas to study over the year from a wide selection including: Italian, Spanish, German, first aid, table tennis, costume design, ceramics and video making. Pupils are particularly enthusiastic about these enrichment activities, recognising that they give opportunities to learn new skills and apply their skills in new and interesting contexts.

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The school pays particular attention to individual pupils who need additional support and who face barriers to their learning. Excellent provision is made for pupils who have diverse and challenging needs and parents describe how the school goes 'the extra mile' in finding solutions to difficulties. Working closely with a broad range of agencies, the school offers individualised programmes of support to pupils who are at risk of failing at school. Teaching assistants are well trained to take a lead in supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in the classroom. There are strong partnerships with local first schools to ensure that pupils who join Year 5 settle into their new school quickly and smoothly. Pupils can still describe in great detail the 'transition boxes' they prepared to help them explain their interests to their new classmates. For the most vulnerable pupils the transition preparation can take up to two years of careful planning and gradual integration into the school. Parents are very aware of the school's supportive pastoral structure which has developed the confidence and interpersonal skills of their children. For example, one parent commented: 'the school has boosted her confidence, broadened her experiences and greatly developed her self esteem and maturity'.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<p>The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning</p>	<p>2</p>
	<p>3</p>
<p>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</p>	<p>1</p>

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders are committed to creating a highly inclusive school that celebrates the achievements of every child. Whole-school self-evaluation has identified appropriate areas for development and suitable plans have been put in place. However, the lack of specific and detailed outcomes in the development plan makes it difficult for leaders to monitor the success of the school's actions. It is not always clear who is accountable for improving pupil progress and middle leaders lack clear and explicit direction from senior leaders about their role in driving the school forward. Subject leaders track the progress of pupils and lead curriculum change. In the past they have monitored teaching and learning informally within their areas but are now increasingly involved in more formalised monitoring procedures including paired observations with senior leaders. However, they have not yet adopted a rigorous enough approach to improving the quality of teaching and learning and to ensure appropriate interventions for pupils who are making slower progress.

All requirements for the safeguarding of pupils were in place at the time of the inspection. The school has thorough and robust systems for assessing risk and ensuring

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the health and safety of staff and pupils. Governors play a key role in monitoring safeguarding actions and the school's outstanding practice in this area has been shared through partnerships with other schools.

The school communicates effectively with parents through reports, regular newsletters and parents' meetings. The recent appointment of a parent support worker has enhanced links with parents and there is a flourishing parents and friends group. The school takes the views of parents seriously and has acted on parental concerns, for example by developing a longer transition period from first schools and introducing a meet and greet system for Year 5 parents.

Equality policies are in place and effective: the school has accurately identified the inequality between the achievement of boys and girls and put in place appropriate action to address this issue. The school is a cohesive community and has a good understanding of its context. Pupils from different backgrounds get on well together and the school has actively sought activities and experiences that will help develop pupils' understanding of other cultures. Opportunities for foreign travel are promoted and well supported.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Almost half of parents and carers returned the inspection questionnaire. Of these parents and carers, the overwhelming majority are happy with their children's experiences in the school. They agree that their children enjoy school and feel safe. A few specific concerns were raised about poor behaviour and instances of bullying, but

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inspectors found that behaviour around the school and in lessons was good and any incidents of bullying were dealt with effectively. Parents and carers expressed confidence with the way that the school is led, the quality of the teaching and the progress being made by their children.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Edward's CofE(VA) Junior High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 350 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 748 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	75	22	224	65	34	10	12	3
The school keeps my child safe	98	28	231	67	10	3	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	85	25	222	64	27	8	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	88	26	228	66	21	6	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	78	23	234	68	17	5	3	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	47	14	233	68	49	14	5	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	65	19	243	70	27	8	4	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	69	20	235	68	12	3	4	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	73	21	231	67	28	8	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	99	29	175	51	47	14	16	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	51	15	221	64	40	12	6	2
The school is led and managed effectively	85	25	221	64	16	5	5	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	92	27	215	62	24	7	5	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



11 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Edward's CofE(VA) Junior High School, Staffordshire, ST13 8DN

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed being in your lessons and talking to you and were impressed with the honesty and maturity with which you answered our questions. Yours is a good school and you are rightly proud of it.

These are the main findings of the inspection.

You participate well in the life of the school through your school council, your roles as 'buddies' and your involvement with extra-curricular activities.

Your attendance is excellent and the school values you and looks after you well.

Most teaching is good and you make good progress.

Your teachers' marking does not always give you clear information on what you have achieved and how you can improve.

Senior leaders have made progress in improving your school since the last inspection. However, some changes have not taken place quickly enough and further changes are needed.

We have asked your school to make the following improvements.

Make sure that more of you make better progress in lessons that are challenging and interesting and that there is a greater range of activities for those of you with different abilities.

Marking of your work is more detailed to help you understand the next steps to improve.

Improve the systems that school leaders use to make sure that teaching is good and you are given support if your progress slows down.

We would like you to help your school by continuing to work hard and behave well.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Deborah James

Lead Inspector

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