

Inspection of St Edward's School

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

Inspection dates: 23 to 25 September 2025

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this outstanding school. From the moment that they join, pupils are caringly welcomed and quickly feel that they belong. All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Staff take great care to understand each pupil's individual needs. These are met through the carefully designed curriculum and highly effective pastoral support. This helps pupils to feel happy, valued, safe and secure.

Building positive relationships is central to the work of the school. This work starts from the point of admission. Precise transition processes help pupils to understand the routines of school life from the outset. Many pupils have previously found school difficult but here they rediscover a love of learning and a self-belief. They develop resilience, independence and confidence. This is due to the carefully planned curriculum and determined approach of staff. The school's ethos of ambition permeates every aspect of school life. As a result, pupils achieve exceptionally well. They gain a broad range of qualifications and are superbly prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils are proud to be ambassadors for their school. They speak warmly about the nurturing approach at St. Edward's. Pupils enjoy spending time with the chickens, dogs and walking Ruby, the Shetland pony.

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

Leaders at all levels are highly ambitious for every pupil. They ensure that this ambition is realised throughout the school. They model a strong culture of inclusion and care. Robust systems of monitoring ensure that the independent school standards ('the standards') are consistently and securely met. Equality and equity are at the heart of the school's work. Adults work tirelessly to identify and remove as many barriers to learning as possible. This determination is driven by the school's vision for every pupil to reach their potential. Staff feel well supported through high-quality professional development and coaching. Clinical expertise enhances the offer further. Staff have a deep understanding of each pupil's unique needs.

The curriculum is broad, aspirational and highly personalised. Different curriculum pathways enable pupils to experience success and achieve a variety of qualifications. The 'Wider Horizons' programme strengthens the provision for pupils. The school's bespoke assessment systems enable staff to accurately identify gaps in learning and provide appropriate support for pupils to catch-up quickly. Staff adapt work skilfully. They revisit key knowledge regularly and check that pupils have grasped key concepts. Pupils produce work of a high quality and take pride in their achievements.

Developing communication and effective literacy skills are at the heart of the school's ethos. Staff understand the importance of pupils acquiring the reading, writing, speaking and listening skills needed to access life and learning beyond the

school gates. They take every opportunity to broaden pupils' knowledge in these areas. This includes ensuring that pupils at the earliest stages of reading are taught phonics so they can read fluently. The texts that pupils read are carefully selected to deepen thinking and encourage debate. Older pupils consider the motives of characters and discuss whether actions are justified. This deliberately links with the school's personal development programme.

Building pupils' character and self-esteem is a strength of the school. Since the previous inspection, the school has carefully crafted the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme to meet the specific needs of pupils and ensure that they develop a secure understanding of healthy relationships. Pupils develop confidence in discussing complex topics. The school is acutely aware of the challenges that some pupils face. As a result, the focus on pupils becoming self-advocates is central to the work of the school.

Enrichment opportunities inspire and broaden pupils' horizons. The school continuously refines this offer to nurture pupils' individual talents and interests. The careers education offered to pupils is ambitious. It is tailored and supported by independent advice and strong use of alumni. Pupils value these opportunities and take pride in contributing to the school and wider community. For example, through fundraising activities, such as raising money to provide clean water to communities in Uganda.

Behaviour across the school is calm, purposeful and respectful. Relationships between pupils and staff are built on trust and mutual respect. Staff take time to have a firm and precise grasp of pupils' needs and interests. This helps them to tailor interactions in a meaningful and personalised way. For example, at the start of the day adults know which pupils prefer a handshake, 'high five' or simple hello as they walk into school. Pupils' attitudes towards learning are highly positive. This is supported by the consistent expectations, well-rehearsed routines and strong pastoral care. Attendance is high. This reflects the supportive environment of the school, which helps pupils to flourish.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	10391711
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	9 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	82
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	St. Edward's School
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
Dates of previous inspection	23 to 25 November 2022

Information about this school

- St Edward's School is an independent special school that caters for boys with a range of SEND, including autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and social emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an EHC plan and many have suffered significant trauma.
- The school has a distinct Catholic ethos and is owned by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Clifton. It is based in a large Grade 2 listed building in rural Hampshire and spread over 189 acres.
- Pupils are referred to the school by their local authority, which funds their place. Most pupils have missed a significant amount of time in school previously.
- The school's last standard inspection took place in November 2022, when its overall effectiveness was judged to be good. Since then, there has been a material change inspection. This took place in November 2023.
- The school uses two unregistered providers of 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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.
- Inspectors met with leaders. The lead inspector held a meeting with representatives of the governing body, including the chair.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, physical education and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, looked at samples of pupils' work and spoke to pupils about their learning.
- 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 views of pupils, staff and parents and carers were gathered through discussions and Ofsted's online surveys, including Ofsted Parent View.

- Inspectors toured the school site to gather evidence about compliance with the standards. Inspectors also reviewed a range of other documents and policies, including on the school’s website.

Inspection team

Sara Staggs, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Carl McCarthy

His Majesty’s Inspector

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