



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

ST EDMUND'S COLLEGE

9 TO 10 NOVEMBER 2016



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

| | | | | |
|----------------------------------|--|-----|------------|-----|
| School | St Edmund's College | | | |
| DfE number | 919/6115 | | | |
| Registered charity number | 311073 | | | |
| Address | St Edmund's College Old Hall Green Ware Hertfordshire SG11 1DS | | | |
| Telephone number | 01920 821504 | | | |
| Email address | enquiries@stedmundscollege.org | | | |
| Headteacher | Mr Paulo Duran | | | |
| Chair of governors | Mr Patrick Mitton | | | |
| Age range | 3 to 18 | | | |
| Number of pupils | 829 | | | |
| | Boys | 460 | Girls | 369 |
| | Day pupils | 699 | Boarders | 130 |
| | EYFS | 15 | Juniors | 192 |
| | Seniors | 480 | Sixth Form | 142 |
| Inspection dates | 9 to 10 November 2016 | | | |

PREFACE

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards following their inspection may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any unmet standards identified at their previous inspection.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is an EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection, reporting on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and grade descriptors from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended house and form meetings, chapel and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Mrs Maureen Bradley | Reporting Inspector |
| Mr Alan Sturrock | Team inspector for boarding (Deputy head, Society of Heads school) |
| Ms Diana Green | Team inspector for EYFS (Head of pre-prep, IAPS school) |
| Mr David Sibson | Team inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school) |
| Mrs Rosemary Chapman | Team inspector (Head of department, GSA school) |
| Mr Gareth Price | Team inspector (Former headmaster, Society of Heads school) |
| Mrs Pauline Clark | Team inspector (Deputy head, GSA school) |
| Mr Anthony Nelson | Team inspector (Director of studies, HMC school) |

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 St Edmund's College is an independent day and boarding school for pupils aged between 3 and 18 years located in Ware, Hertfordshire. Founded by Cardinal William Allen in 1568, the college is the oldest Catholic school in England. Originally located in Douai, France, the college transferred to England in 1793. The school changed from being a boys' school to being fully co-educational in 1986. St Edmund's College is an unincorporated charitable trust whose trustees are the board of governors.
- 1.2 The school comprises a preparatory school educating pupils from 3 to 11 years and a senior school catering for day and boarding pupils from 11 to 18 years. The preparatory school and the senior school occupy the same site. Boarders are accommodated in the main school building with separate areas for girls and boys. Since the previous inspection, the school has refurbished the science department, classrooms, the hall and parts of the boarding house.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school's mission is to inspire students not only intellectually but also spiritually, through participation in the sacramental life of the school and helping them to acquire a deeper understanding of the Catholic faith. The school aims to realise the God-given potential, in body, mind and spirit, of all members of the school community through service and leadership.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of professional backgrounds, mostly from families living in Hertfordshire or north London. Some boarders are from the UK but the majority are from other countries such as China, Bulgaria and other European and Asian countries. The school has identified 133 pupils as requiring support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan, requiring support with a physical disability. Ninety-seven pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL) and all of them receive support from the school.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

| <i>School name</i> | <i>National Curriculum Name</i> |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| Elements | Year 7 |
| Rudiments | Year 8 |
| Grammar | Year 9 |
| Syntax | Year 10 |
| Poetry | Year 11 |
| Rhetoric 1 | Year 12 |
| Rhetoric 2 | Year 13 |

Recommendations from previous inspections

1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was in December 2010. The recommendations from that inspection were:

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS):
 1. request parental permission, at the time of the child's admission to the provision, to seek any necessary emergency medical advice or treatment in the future;
 2. implement an effective policy on administering medicines, including effective management systems to support individual children with medical needs;
 3. keep written records of all medicines administered to children, and inform parents;
 4. obtain prior written permission from parents for each and every medicine before any medication is given.
- Raise standards in the sixth form.

1.7 The recommendation of the intermediate boarding inspection in April 2014 was:

- ensure effective feedback is given in response to boarders' requests and concerns.

2. KEY FINDINGS

2.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.

- The pupils demonstrate good levels of skill, knowledge and understanding across all areas of learning and in their extra-curricular activities. The college is successfully fulfilling its aim to provide a strong academic foundation for young minds.
- By the end of their primary education, pupils' level of progress is good. In the senior school, pupils make good progress and in the sixth form levels of progress are often high. Where less academic progress is made by pupils of all ages, it is often the result of teaching providing insufficient challenge for the ability of the pupils.
- Pupils entering GCSE and A-level examinations achieve results above the national average and in some IGCSE subjects their results are higher than worldwide norms. The examination results for pupils with SEND and EAL show they often exceed expectations in the grades attained.
- The pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy working in a collaborative manner and are very supportive of each other.

2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils develop excellent spiritual understanding through being fully engaged in the spiritual life of the school.
- Pupils develop into mature, socially confident young people with excellent moral integrity as a result of the many opportunities available to them in school and through their charitable work.
- Through an excellent attitude to taking on responsibility and service to others, pupils grow in self-knowledge and develop values which prepare them to move successfully into the next phase of their education or employment.
- Boarders make an excellent contribution to the life of the school. They develop tolerance and respect for others as they learn to live successfully with those from other cultural backgrounds.

Recommendations

2.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

- Ensure teaching provides a sufficient level of academic challenge for all pupils.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- 3.2 The college is successfully fulfilling its aim to provide a strong academic foundation for young minds. Pupils are very competent when applying their knowledge and understanding to classroom work where they engage well with their teachers in a positive and focused learning atmosphere. They develop their interests and talents through access to a broad and balanced curriculum and extra-curricular programme as they progress through the school. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, almost all parents and pupils expressed satisfaction at the level of progress made.
- 3.3 Throughout the preparatory school, the pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are good across all areas of learning. In the EYFS, most pupils achieve all of the Early Learning Goals by the end of Reception. The children are articulate and listen to one another and their teachers, and they show competent understanding of teachers' instructions. They write clearly and build up words, use description, read, count and understand the tasks set. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 demonstrate thorough subject knowledge in question-and-answer sessions, and their books show evidence of good investigative work, analysis and conclusion. Pupils are proud of their clear handwriting style and consistent, neat layout of work. A focus on all aspects of numeracy at an appropriate level, with good strategies from an early age, ensures that pupils demonstrate secure numeracy skills. The 'Learning Log' homework books show that older pupils in Years 4 to 6 are capable of independent study, are competent in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and can use analysis and hypothesis in their work. Helped by excellent planning and preparation, pupils develop physically, creatively and aesthetically, and displays show high standards of art and project work.
- 3.4 By the end of Year 6, nationally standardised tests for reading and mathematics show pupils' progress to be at least in line with the average for those of a similar age. Evidence in the classroom, and in their written work across all subjects, shows attainment and progress for most pupils is good for their age. Most pupils are successful in gaining places in their choice of school for the next stage of their education. Some pupils are successful in gaining scholarships to other schools but most pupils are successful in progressing through to the senior section of the College.
- 3.5 Senior pupils are articulate and knowledgeable young people. They are not afraid to reveal their weaknesses in understanding by asking necessary questions to consolidate their learning. They show confidence and trust in their teachers and peers to help and support them. Writing skills are well developed, and they are fluent speakers in both English and foreign languages. Mathematical and scientific knowledge is secure and applied successfully to other subjects. Most pupils manipulate data confidently and formulate and test hypotheses. They show a good understanding of subject-specific vocabulary and when to use it. Pupils in the sixth form show good debating skills, powers of analysis and deduction and high standards of written research and project work. Pupils of all ages are competent in using ICT when it is appropriate and have a good understanding of the various programmes suitable for their work and their research.
- 3.6 Towards the end of their senior education, the externally standardised progress data that is available shows pupils of all abilities make good progress. In the sixth form, levels of progress over the previous two years have been high in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. Pupils attain good levels of success in public examinations. Pupils entering GCSE examinations in 2014 and 2015 achieved results above the national average and in some IGCSE subjects their results were higher than worldwide norms. The examination results for pupils with SEND and EAL show they often exceed expectations in the grades attained. Sixth-form pupils in 2015 and 2016 achieved A-level results above the national average. Senior pupils further demonstrate their well-developed skills and ability through success in a wide range of academic challenges including essay competitions, the Diploma for Catholic Studies and science olympiads.

- 3.7 Pupils' academic progress is improved through their work being closely monitored as they move through the school. This is enabled by excellent methods of tracking and the collection of data. Throughout the school, those with SEND or EAL often make excellent progress due to the high level of individual support offered primarily in the classroom but also by the individual attention given by the learning support department and the international centre. Although other pupils make good progress, their progress is not excellent because teaching does not always offer a sufficient degree of academic challenge, especially for the more able. Pupils in the sixth form display good independent learning and research skills. This demonstrates successful fulfilment of the recommendation from the previous inspection, as seen in the improvement in pupils' examination grades over the last three years.
- 3.8 Pupils' achievement in their extra-curricular activities is good and often excellent. In the senior school, many participate in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DofE) and achieve gold level awards. Leadership skills are well developed through their work in the Combined Cadet Force (CCF). Throughout the school, pupils are especially successful in the creative and performing arts, especially in music where many achieve the highest grades in their musical instrument examinations. They enjoy performing in school productions and gain good standards in drama examinations. Individual and team success in sports such as netball, football, tennis, judo and swimming is evident throughout the school. Participation by boarders in the activity programme allows a degree of success in the development of skills that are new to many of them. This is exemplified when pupils from overseas participate in activities such as house hockey competitions. The development of fine motor skills is enhanced by personalised activities such as the craft club, an important contribution for pupils with physical difficulties. Pupils extend their ability and interests in other clubs and activities programmed to take place in the final period of the day on the school timetable. Examples include success in regional and national competitions in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) projects. Almost all parents and pupils reported satisfaction in their questionnaire regarding the choice of extra-curricular activity.
- 3.9 The pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. Well-planned and structured lessons with clear learning objectives ensure that pupils of all ages stay focused and engaged in their learning in a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Children in the EYFS work happily together, and they embrace the attitude to 'have a go'. Older pupils demonstrate independence and a willingness to work collaboratively. They engage well with the teachers, and especially with their peers in paired or small-group discussions. They are beginning to be more responsible for their own learning through project work and research set by the teachers. Pupils conscientiously self-assess and peer-assess their work and write targets to inform progress and further improvement. In all areas of school life, the pupils try to follow the school aims to do their best and achieve to their potential. Pupils have a good attitude towards success and this is particularly evident in boarding where success in any aspect of college life is valued by other pupils. Boarders demonstrate a positive attitude to their academic studies with many highlighting the benefit of being a boarder in allowing them time to be more focused on work.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils have excellent spiritual awareness, are socially confident young people and have great moral integrity. This is because the school offers pupils rich and varied opportunities to develop individually and socially as part of the school and wider community in accordance with their aims. Almost all parents reported in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire that the school promotes an environment which successfully supports their children's personal development.
- 4.3 Pupils demonstrate excellent spiritual development and understand the significance of their faith in their lives. Pupils are confident about articulating their beliefs and appreciate that prayer and worship are central to their lives. Supported by the periods of reflection and prayer provided for them throughout their day, the centrality of chapel services and the extensive coverage of issues relating to spiritual matters in their curriculum, they have an excellent understanding of who they are and what they believe. The role of the chaplaincy is central to the life of a number of pupils where they reflect on the role of faith in their lives in the designated Chaplaincy room. Many pupils actively involve themselves in both the preparation and leadership of worship, and sixth-form pupils use appropriate liturgical language in their written work to explore religious issues around the world.
- 4.4 Pupils have a strong moral understanding and are able to explain very clearly the difference between right and wrong and the reason why school rules are important. They evaluate and take responsibility for their own actions and support each other in the making of difficult decisions that have an impact on their own behaviour and on the school community. Pupils throughout the school are able to talk about the importance of British law and justice in society. The youngest children understand the importance of keeping promises and being kind to each other. All pupils show a good standard of self-discipline and respect for their teachers, with whom they establish excellent relationships. They willingly take up posts of responsibility through student committees to influence school life and support each other. Younger pupils respect older pupils and see them as role models and a source of help and advice. Almost all parents and pupils reported that the school actively promotes good behaviour.
- 4.5 Pupils show a healthy self-confidence and display a positive demeanour in their social engagement with others. They know how to be 'good losers' and are aware of the importance of supporting their friends and congratulating them on their successes. Pupils speak highly of the school's sense of inclusion for all and report that the house system makes a strong contribution to developing their social skills as they play and work together across all ages. Differences are respected and other faiths are celebrated throughout the calendar year. Pupils demonstrate a great concern for social justice and understand it is part of the Christian tradition to help those in need. Pupils of all ages understand the values important to British society and recognise them as those promoted by the school ethos. During work in the curriculum, in assembly and in form time, they eagerly engaged in discussions on the importance of democracy and upholding its aims in response to Britain's decision to leave the European Union and the issues of the American presidential election.
- 4.6 Personal development is extended by a wide range of trips and visits. Overseas trips, such as the visit to India for pupils in the sixth form, have had a considerable impact on developing their knowledge and understanding of overseas issues. The school promotes 'service' and recognises pupils who demonstrate this characteristic. As a result, pupils devote a considerable amount of their time in charity work where they have raised considerable sums of money for charities both overseas and at home. Their achievement in these ventures makes them very proud and these opportunities enable them to extend their personal skills.
- 4.7 Boarders are mature, independent and show accountability for their own choices and decisions. They make a strong contribution to the life of the school and the development of its community spirit. The international pupils feel welcome, and tolerance and respect for others is evident as they

learn how to live successfully together and develop friendships with those from other cultural backgrounds. Boarders grow in confidence and enjoy boarding as a result of the excellent support given to help them settle into the boarding routine and the help given with any concerns they may have. They learn how to make decisions which will help improve the boarding community through access to the house suggestion box and the boarding council. As recommended by the previous boarding inspection, feedback from the school council is helpful to pupils' understanding of school life. Boarders report feeling safe and happy in their boarding houses, which has been helped by the appointment of a staff member as a boarding mentor.

- 4.8 Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and understand the importance of maintaining healthy lifestyles and relationships. Young children have a positive self-image through opportunities for dressing up, role play, taking risks and sharing success and achievement. Activities in the preparatory school help them to challenge gender issues and cultural and racial stereotyping. As they grow older, they learn the importance of coping with mental health difficulties and the challenges that life may present to them when they become adults. Boarders and day pupils find access to the infirmary reassuring if they are ill or need other medical attention, and they know how to access a school counsellor if required. The recommendations of the previous full inspection report to ensure that medical procedures for children in the EYFS are improved have been fulfilled. The EYFS department now provides a room with suitable medical facilities for sick children and the organisation for the administration of medicines has been improved. Pupils take adequate daily exercise, making excellent use of the extensive school facilities for sport and relaxation.
- 4.9 As pupils progress through the school, they grow in self-esteem, begin to understand their own strengths and weaknesses and are then ready to move to the next phase of their education or employment. The transition policy from EYFS to pre-prep is followed carefully, and an induction programme prepares junior children for life in secondary school. A careers programme allows the older pupils to consider their options for life after school, university education and employment.