

St Elizabeth's School

South End, Much Hadham, SG10 6EW

Inspection dates 17–18 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Good leadership and management, with effective support from governors, have ensured that pupils are taught well and make good progress.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well through the subjects taught.
- Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Teaching is now good.
- Assessment procedures are good and assessment is used to set challenging targets. Each pupil has an individualised learning programme that accelerates their learning.
- Teachers plan interesting activities to motivate pupils and build their confidence as learners.
- Pupils' behaviour and the school's efforts to keep pupils safe are good.
- Pupils' medical needs are met with great care and dignity.
- The sixth form is good. Some students acquire work-related skills and qualifications to go on to college. The students who have more complex difficulties gain good life skills to prepare them for the next stage in their development.
- Pupils achieve well. They make good progress in developing their communication, literacy and numeracy skills.
- Parents comment that they are delighted with the progress their children make.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always use questions effectively to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers and other adults do not use observational assessments consistently well to identify the next steps that pupils need to take in their learning.
- Sometimes staff do not give pupils enough time to talk through behavioural matters, and this holds back the development of their personal skills.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector carried out five lesson observations with the principal and went on a walk through the school during teaching time.
- The inspector examined pupils' work across the school jointly with senior leaders. He also heard primary-aged and secondary-aged pupils read in their literacy lesson and looked at their reading records.
- Meetings were held with a group of different pupils and informal discussions took place with different pupils at break time. Meetings were also held with senior leaders, subject leaders, the manager of clinical therapists the head of care and behavioural support practitioners. The inspector met with five governors, including the chief executive for epilepsy provision, which is on the same site as St Elizabeth's School.
- The inspector took account of 24 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire, including six comments. He also looked at 41 Ofsted questionnaires returned from staff.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including the school improvement plan, a summary of the school's most recent self-evaluation, the school's monitoring of teaching and learning file, records of governing body meetings, safeguarding procedures, information about pupils' progress over time, records of behaviour (including the restraints log) and attendance figures.

Inspection team

Jeffery Plumb, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Elizabeth's School is a small, all-through, special school which caters for pupils with epilepsy and other neurological conditions. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plans. The large majority of pupils have additional needs such as autistic spectrum disorder, severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, physical disabilities and a range of other health needs.
- Thirty one pupils are residential and seven are day only pupils. The residential provision was inspected in March 2014 and was found to be outstanding in all areas.
- There are very few primary-aged pupils, and boys significantly outnumber girls. Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. Some classes range from Year 5 to Year 11.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, including those looked after by the local authority, is average.
- As a non-maintained school it does not receive primary sports funding, or catch-up funding to support pupils in Year 7. The school receives pupil premium funding for a very small number of disadvantaged pupils.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British and very few are from families where English is spoken as an additional language.
- Year 11 and sixth form students attend Hertfordshire Regional College for a drama course and also a local farm where they get credits for work-experience as part of a City and Guilds Programme.
- Since the previous inspection, governors have undergone a review by an external agency and there have been changes in the senior leadership of the school. The Principal was appointed in September 2013 and another assistant principal was appointed very soon after. Another senior post has recently been taken up by a longer-serving member of staff.
- The school and residential provision share a campus that meets the needs of people with epilepsy. There is a college on site with residential provision for adults. There is nursing and therapist provision on site. The whole organisation is managed by a chief executive. It is a charitable organisation linked to the Catholic Congregation of the Daughters of the Cross of Liege, in Belgium. The chief executive manages the care of residential adults and the on-site college, as well as this residential special school.
- The school has recently applied to have its residential provision changed from 38 weeks to 52 weeks and is currently seeking registration as a children's home.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement by improving the quality of teaching to outstanding by ensuring that all teachers:
 - use questions to deepen pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills
 - make better use of observational assessments to identify the very small steps pupils with complex needs make and use these to plan learning outcomes accurately and promptly, and make sure they are achieved by pupils.
- Ensure that all teachers and learning support assistants consistently use the school's approach to talk through behavioural issues with pupils to promote increased personal development.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The school has improved under the leadership of the principal and governing body. With support from other special schools, assessment is now accurate, and systems are in place to enable governors to hold senior leaders to account for pupils' progress. This was not the case at the time of the previous inspection.
- Leaders at all levels have developed a strong learning culture throughout the school, ensuring that all teachers are committed to raising pupils' achievement and improving the quality of teaching. All parents who responded to the online questionnaire Parent View confirmed that they would recommend the school to others.
- Senior leaders monitor rigorously the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. The management of staff performance is robust and no teacher can climb the pay scale if they do not meet the standards required. Objectives are set to improve the quality of teaching linked to national teaching standards. Any weaknesses are supported through training and this has led to improvements in teaching.
- Leaders are ensuring that the curriculum is broad and balanced and prepares pupils well for their lives ahead. For example, some sixth form students with the most complex learning needs are supported to use a picture schedule in everyday situations such as shopping and to develop practical life skills like cooking a meal. Some work is linked to a City and Guilds Programme, leading to a qualification that will help them secure a college course when they leave school.
- Well-designed personal plans, based on a good knowledge of their needs, means that all pupils follow subjects that help them improve their communication and numeracy skills well. There is a good personal, health and social programme. Younger pupils follow a National Curriculum modified for their disabilities. The subject leadership of English and mathematics is good. A wide range of clubs and visitors to the school enhance pupils' learning.
- Senior leaders ensure that all pupils have an equal chance to succeed, and work hard to ensure that they progress well from a wide range of starting points.
- All pupils learn about life in modern Britain within well-chosen topics in their personal, health and social education programme. The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Older pupils develop responsibility and improve their social skills when working in the community, for example in a charity shop. Their spiritual development is enhanced as they work on a local community farm, experiencing a sense of awe and wonder over the hatching of a chick. Religious education and the Catholic liturgical assembly calendar provide them with opportunities to reflect spiritually. Through this same programme pupils learn about tolerance and respect for people from a wide range of faiths. Within their capability pupils have a good sense of right and wrong.
- With support from the principal, teachers are developing the recording of their own observations to aid assessment and planning. For example, on-the-spot assessments for pupils with severe learning difficulties are helping teachers to improve learning for them. However, a few pupils with complex medical needs progress at a slightly slower rate than their peers because too much reliance is placed by managers and teachers on published assessment systems rather than their own observations of when a pupil is ready for the next step.
- There is a suitably strong emphasis on physical education. Pupils with epilepsy are supported in improving their balance, particularly after seizures, by a team of physiotherapists who work on a programme of support with them in the gym. Speech therapists support pupils, as appropriate, to help them communicate.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are providing good support to the school and challenge its work effectively. They have a plan for themselves to help them to become better governors. They are closely involved in self-evaluation and school development planning. Through detailed progress reports they ask tough questions and hold

leaders to account. They have an accurate view of teaching, learning and assessment. Governors oversee the management of the Principal's performance well and ensure robust procedures for setting the Principal's objectives. They are making sure that the legal requirements for safeguarding are met, especially through training, assessments of potential health and safety risks, and the robust implementation of vetting procedures to check the suitability of staff to keep pupils safe.

- Governors are diligent in ensuring that any additional funds are targeted at disadvantaged pupils. They ensure that the school promotes tolerance of and respect for people of different faiths, cultures and lifestyles, and prepares pupils for life in modern Britain. They ensure that programmes are put in place to help parents manage their children's behaviour. This year they provided a pilot respite care scheme for parents in the summer holidays.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Parents, staff and governors believe that behaviour is good and the school deals effectively with bullying. Discussion with different pupils revealed that bullying is rare and is always dealt with effectively.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning, as reflected in lessons. Behaviour is managed well. For instance, teachers take into account pupils' preferences so they are taught in an environment that prevents them from being distracted or distressed.
- The good behaviour of most pupils is having a positive impact on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as seen in the respect they have for others with different disabilities from their own. Only when staff do not give pupils enough time to discuss their behaviour before taking action does personal development slow. Discriminatory or derogatory language rarely occurs and when it does it is quickly dealt with. Incident records show that there are no racist incidents recorded.
- Skilful behaviour management of pupils with complex needs ensures that they are swiftly re-engaged with learning when their attention wanders.
- Pupils are courteous and respectful to staff and visitors. They are kind and helpful towards one another. They understand the importance of good behaviour at home, in school and after school. Year 11 and sixth form students understand the importance of listening to the instructions from their manager and following them in the workplace.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Good procedures are in place to ensure that the visitors to the school are checked. Trips out of school are thoroughly risk-assessed. Pupils play safely and follow the safety guidelines when handling equipment, using the internet and playing sport. The more able pupils are adept at assessing risk in the workplace.
- Pupils move around the site calmly and safely. They say that they can go to any member of staff if they are troubled about anything at all. However, the senior leaders recognise that they are at an early stage of developing pupils' awareness of how to deal with other potential risks, such as those posed by the use of the internet. Staff are currently revising a module in the personal, social and health programme to address this.
- Attendance is average and improving. The high levels of medical needs is reflected in attendance figures. However, a team of therapists and nurses enables many of their medical needs to be addressed in school.

The quality of teaching is good

- In the sixth form and throughout the school, work in pupils' books, the school's data and visits to observe learning in lessons confirm that teaching has improved since the previous inspection.
- Pupils focus well on their learning and respond appropriately to instructions because of different ways teachers have to communicate (using sign, symbols and objects) with pupils what they are to do and

learn. Teachers and teaching assistants have good relationships with pupils and manage their behaviour well in lessons.

- Interesting activities are planned which motivate pupils and build their confidence. Pupils are challenged and the more-able pupils are speedily moved on to stretching work.
- Basic skills of communication, literacy and numeracy are promoted well through all learning, including in the sixth form. Discussion with sixth form students revealed how they applied these skills when working in one of the school's charity shops.
- Sometimes questioning fails to deepen learning. For example, a student stated that a lizard was a reptile but the teacher did not develop this or give the student opportunity to write about it when they set a writing task. This is not always the case as questioning does deepen understanding in other lessons.
- Pupils benefit from regular homework which supports learning well. An examination of pupils' work shows that this has a positive impact on their progress.
- Assessment systems have improved significantly since the previous inspection. External moderation with other special schools has ensured their accuracy. Assessment information is used to set pupils challenging targets in all subjects and pupils understand them.
- Teachers are developing assessment further. The photographic evidence in learning journals shows that ongoing assessments in lessons move pupils with complex needs forward with their learning. Pupils are beginning to evaluate each other's progress and support each other's learning.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Evidence from the school's data, pupils' books and folders (including learning journals for pupils with the more complex learning needs) and observations of the impact of teaching on pupils' learning over time demonstrates that pupils are making good progress from their starting points on entry to the school. This means that, by the time they leave, they have achieved well.
- Pupils throughout the school are making good progress in communication, literacy and numeracy. This prepares them well for the next stage of their learning. The small number of primary-aged pupils make good progress in reading.
- Year 11 and sixth form students make good progress in their examination courses and achieve qualifications that meet their needs. They also make good progress in work-related learning and life skills. A recently introduced accreditation programme, highly personalised, enables the more-able sixth form students to gain credits through work-related learning towards a qualification that enables them to access a place at college when they leave school to continue education.
- Sixth form students on the alternative courses at Church Farm and the Hertfordshire Regional College achieve well, particularly in drama.
- Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and severe learning difficulties do well. They learn life skills such as using a toaster. The use of reading picture schedules enables them to cope with making choices.
- The more-able students achieve equally well. They can complete two-stepped problems in mathematics, measure accurately and engage in enterprise projects, such as growing plants and vegetable, and selling them to make profit. They write poems and can change words in the school's prayer, contributing to their spiritual development.
- Different groups of pupils, including boys and girls and the few minority ethnic pupils, make equally good progress because they are given tasks which challenge their learning at the right level of difficulty.

- The very few disadvantaged pupils who receive additional funding make the same good progress as others.
- Pupils take part in a wide range of playtime sporting activities and most exercise in the after-school residential activities.
- Progress data and pupils' work show that the rate of progress of some pupils with the most complex medical needs, including mental health needs, is slower than that of their peers. The school has recently introduced a new assessment procedure to measure the very minute steps of progress these pupils make but it is too early to evaluate its impact.

The sixth form provision

is good

- Sixth form students are supported well in two mixed-age classes. One is for students with complex needs, including severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. More-able students in the second class follow a work-related programme and have an opportunity to receive an accredited City and Guilds qualification to access a college course.
- Good management of the curriculum ensure that students make good progress from their various starting points. Students with complex needs learn how to communicate what they need when they go shopping to get ingredients for cooking. They are supported to shop, prepare a meal and develop other life skills for their next stage. More-able students develop the communication and numeracy skills required for a college course and potentially for the workforce.
- Students are taught well. Assessment is used to plan specific outcomes for each student so as to accelerate their achievement.
- Students are helped to manage their medical needs by themselves as much as possible. Their social development is good and they begin to take responsibility for their own learning. The more-able students are taught how to travel independently and apply their numeracy skills in practical life skill, such as measuring and beginning to use money.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	117665
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	442006

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	5–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	38
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	16
Number of boarders on roll	31
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sister Annette Clemence
Principal	Sharon Wallin
Date of previous school inspection	14 November 2012
Telephone number	01279 844270
Fax number	01279 842918
Email address	school@stelizabeths.org.uk

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