

Inspection of a good school: St Elizabeth's School

South End, Much Hadham, Hertfordshire SG10 6EW

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 October 2023

Outcome

St Elizabeth's School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils receive supportive care and attention at St Elizabeth's School. They arrive each morning eager to start their learning. Staff welcome pupils warmly. They understand what every pupil needs to help them settle quickly. Positive, trusting relationships flow through the school. This helps to ensure that pupils feel safe and happy during their time at school.

Staff understand the different ways pupils communicate their needs. Adults respond effectively to any occasions when pupils become dysregulated. They show kindness and sensitivity to help pupils to manage their emotions. Clear routines support a calm and orderly learning environment.

All staff have high expectations and place no limits on what pupils can achieve. They encourage pupils to be active in their learning to help build pupils' confidence and independence. Success is celebrated so that pupils know when they have done well.

Pupils enjoy the wider opportunities presented by the school's location. They grow and cook food from the allotments and collect eggs laid by the chickens. The orchard in the grounds provides opportunities for pupils to pick and sell the apples.

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

The school has designed a new curriculum. It is well sequenced and matched effectively to meet the needs of pupils who have profound and multiple difficulties. The curriculum outlines clear pathways, personalised accurately to pupils' needs. Pupils have individual learning plans that map out their targets. The school makes use of pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans to tailor a curriculum to support pupils' academic and personal achievement. Pupils benefit from the on-site support from health professionals, therapists and specialist support workers. Their work is seamlessly integrated into pupils' timetables.

The 'pathways' approach is a recent introduction. The school has not carried out an in-depth evaluation of the impact of its new approaches. There is not a clear enough understanding of the refinements that now need to be made to the school's curriculum plans. This is to ensure that all pupils make the strongest progress they are capable of.

Staff skilfully plan activities to build pupils' understanding in small steps. They find imaginative ways to revisit key knowledge to help pupils remember what they have learned. Regular assessment informs adults how to adapt work to help pupils progress with their learning.

A broad range of strategies support the different ways pupils learn how to communicate. Many pupils are non-verbal. Staff are well trained to recognise pupils' requests and wishes. This means pupils have a voice and take an active role in their learning.

At the earliest opportunity, pupils learn to read. They look forward to visiting the 'reading garden' where they have their lessons. Early reading is well taught using the school's chosen phonics scheme. Pupils enjoy selecting their favourite books and hearing stories read by adults.

Preparing pupils for their future lives is a thread running through all the pathways. Meaningful activities encourage pupils to use their knowledge in practical contexts, for example working in the 'handy candy' shop. This helps to develop their social skills. Older pupils receive clear guidance about roles they may carry out in the community. They are well supported in making future choices about their next steps beyond school.

Carefully planned experiences support pupils' wider development. An active school council teaches pupils about teamwork and collaboration. Pupils also contribute positively during class and whole-school assemblies. They enjoy visits to wildlife parks, places of worship and different sporting events.

Behaviour is well managed at the school. Pupils learn to respect one another. Whether in classrooms, eating in the canteen or outdoors in the 'park', pupils enjoy friendly relationships with their peers and adults.

Staff are very positive about their experiences of working at the school. There is a strong team ethic where staff support one another. They always feel well prepared when leaders introduce new initiatives. This helps staff to manage their workload and supports their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not fully evaluated the impact of their new curriculum. This means that they are not confident about how well these approaches are working. Leaders should ensure that they check and evaluate the effectiveness of the whole curriculum, identifying any changes that need to be made so that all pupils make the strongest progress.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2014.

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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	117665
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10288466
Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	42
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	18
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Christopher Kemball
Headteacher	Lisa Tooley
Website	www.stelizabeths.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 November 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The current headteacher was appointed in September 2022.
- The school is located on a large site called St Elizabeth's Centre. It shares the site with a residential home and college.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. These are for severe learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties or profound and multiple learning difficulties as well as other neurological conditions caused or complicated by epilepsy.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- St Elizabeth's School is a Roman Catholic faith school located in the Diocese of Westminster. The religious character of the school was inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in May 2016 and was judged to be outstanding. The school has been notified that its next inspection of its religious character will take place in the 2023 to 2024 cycle of inspections.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, senior leaders, teachers and governors, including the chair of governors and a trustee. The lead inspector also met with parents informally as they collected their children from the school.
- The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in communication and early reading, mathematics and cognition, and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with pathway leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at additional areas of learning.
- Inspectors looked at individual pupils' EHC plans and checked these against the school's provision.
- The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experiences at school and observed them during informal times.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents through their responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and parents' free-text comments. Inspectors also considered responses to the Ofsted surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Steve Mellors, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Clare Gammons

Ofsted Inspector

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