



In June 2021, six inspectors from the Independent School's Inspectorate (ISI) visited St Edmund's as part of the normal inspection cycle for independent schools. The inspection took place in the first week that inspections resumed after the COVID pandemic. The inspection combined two separate elements: an Educational Quality Inspection (EQI) and a Regulatory Compliance Inspection (RCI). St Edmund's last received an inspection on Educational Quality in 2014 whereas it has undergone Compliance Inspections in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2018 (due to the school's expansion to GCSE).

The 2021 combined inspection is published by ISI as a single report and the full text can be found using the link at the end of this document. The grade "Excellent" is the highest grade awarded by ISI and is equivalent to the "Outstanding" grade used by OFSTED. We have extracted below the main excerpts from the two inspection elements into what we hope will provide a useful summary:

## 1. Educational Quality Inspection

### Key findings

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- Pupils develop high levels of knowledge, skills and understanding as they progress through the school.
  - Pupils are adept and confident communicators.
  - Pupils have outstanding attitudes to their learning and are determined to succeed.
  - Pupils achieve well in a wide variety of curricular and co-curricular activities.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- Pupils develop strong self-confidence and self-knowledge from an early age.
  - Pupils demonstrate kindness and compassion towards one another and are highly respectful.
  - Pupils are confident and considered decision makers.
  - Pupils contribute enthusiastically to help create a strong and vibrant school community.

### Recommendation

- 3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to:
- Further accelerate pupils' progress in information and communication technology (ICT) and digital literacy through wider use of digital devices in teaching.

### The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 Pupils of all ages display excellent knowledge, skills and understanding and develop as highly resilient learners as they move through the school. They make rapid progress in most of their lessons because of a wide range of activities and effective planning in committed teaching at all levels. Pupils say that they can build effectively on prior work and

knowledge and that the setting of targets and success criteria in teaching are very helpful in understanding how to achieve their long-term goals. In the EYFS, children extend their language skills highly effectively in an environment where each child is nurtured and encouraged to gain confidence. Slightly older pupils build up mathematical and language skills in response to a wide variety of well-paced and directed tasks. Prep school pupils improved their understanding of the world by learning to read data presented in maps, charts and tables whilst developing their ICT and language skills. Senior school pupils exhibited advanced understanding of the role and effects of hormones and applied previous knowledge highly effectively when analysing emotive language and specific phrases in an English set text. Throughout the school, pupils are happy to take risks with their learning and to learn from mistakes. They say that they develop their academic, sporting and creative skills to a high level because teaching inspires them and helps them to improve. Pupils who have SEND make rapid progress towards their long-term goals because they receive highly effective support, which is well targeted and carefully monitored.

- 3.6 In the EYFS, children make rapid progress from their starting points to reach levels of development well above national expectations in all areas. In both Nursery and Reception, the early learning goals are consistently exceeded. In the lower prep and prep settings, the school's own assessments show rapid progress in relation to assessments of pupils' potential on entry to the school. Pupils' attainment at GCSE for the years 2018-20 shows improvement year on year. In 2019 results showed 55% of pupils achieving A\* and A grades. In 2020 around two-thirds of pupils achieved grades 7-9 in centre-assessed GCSEs. Pupils with SEND and EAL perform in line with their peers, as evidenced by a comprehensive system for tracking attainment and progress. Pupils transferring into senior schools at age 13 and sixth forms at 16 have performed well in scholarship examinations for some highly selective schools over the last three years. Progress, as shown by data provided by the school and by observations and work scrutiny, is excellent. Almost all the parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaires agreed that teaching enables their child to make progress and almost all the pupils expressed the view that they learn a lot in lessons.
- 3.7 Throughout the school pupils are adept and confident communicators. Lower prep pupils listened carefully and then were able to identify blended sounds, put them into a word and create sentences of differing complexity using them. Prep pupils followed written instructions accurately when solving mathematical problems and showed strong writing skills when using persuasive language to write about a charity of their choice. All pupils listen carefully to their teachers and to each other. In the senior school pupils showed high levels of focus in order to understand complex scientific information and respond readily to questioning. By the time pupils reach GCSE level they are skilled and confident collaborators, arguing cogently in groups and capable of taking on a broad range of views in order to enhance their learning. They write highly effectively in a range of styles and showed clear understanding of the use of cliché and other linguistic elements whilst studying a set text. During the most recent period of remote learning, pupils aided their progress with innovative ideas such as practising language skills by cooking from a Spanish recipe in their kitchens or role-playing as newscasters to their class using digital connections, making good progress by creating new opportunities to communicate.
- 3.8 Pupils develop agile mathematical skills across the age range and apply them across the curriculum. Children in EYFS accurately compare length, shape and size and count with confidence. Lower prep pupils demonstrated effective mathematical skills in music, linking rhythms, recognising the number of beats in words and enthusiastically counting backwards from ten with confidence. In the lower prep, SEND pupils successfully responded to numerical tasks and were effectively supported. In a few lessons more able pupils lose interest when the tasks set do not challenge them sufficiently. More able pupils made rapid progress solving problems set for them during registration sessions. Prep school pupils apply their mathematical knowledge successfully to tasks across the curriculum and in the senior school pupils are apply statistical and data-handling techniques with confidence in geographical enquiries, sciences and design and technology (DT).
- 3.9 Pupils use ICT skills effectively across the whole school. Children in EYFS use the interactive whiteboard while learning independently and slightly older pupils create effective and varied digital work in response to tasks set. Prep school pupils showed outstanding IT skills in their microclimate enquiries and senior pupils used advanced digital photograph technologies to create highly effective pieces of digital art. Pupils develop skills of coding in ICT lessons and in the senior school many use word processing and spreadsheet tools with ease. During recent periods of remote learning pupils have developed their ICT skills by working on a variety of devices at home and GCSE pupils used digital technology with teachers to engage in effective dialogue about their coursework. These strategies enabled pupils to improve their outcomes. Some pupils feel that more extensive use of digital devices in the classroom would further develop their skills and increase their learning opportunities. Inspection evidence supports this view as many pupils now use digital learning to enhance their understanding, for instance using applications which assist learning in modern foreign languages.
- 3.10 Throughout the school pupils have outstanding attitudes to their learning and are determined to succeed. This is

because they respond positively to teaching which consistently strives to help each child make progress, discover their own passions and have aspirational goals. Pupils become sophisticated learners. They have highly developed study skills by the time they enter the senior school in response to the school's effective programme to explore new ways of learning. Pupils value working with success criteria and targets to evaluate their progress and improve through their use. They become independent and well-motivated, choosing to attend workshops on offer during activity time in the week and on alternate Saturday mornings. They cite the availability of these as a strong factor in their successful academic outcomes. In the EYFS, children demonstrate their developing study skills by choosing how to learn, using a wide range of sources, analysing situations and hypothesising about what will happen and when. By the time they are in the prep school these skills are evident in a wide range of lessons where pupils demonstrate that they can evaluate sources of information, review each other's work and research an issue, such as environmental destruction, with confidence. Senior school pupils relish opportunities to refine their understanding of a subject or an issue by researching it independently or by teasing out their understanding of it in collaboration with other pupils and adults. They show initiative and energy when working together towards a common goal, whether that is an effective performance of Shakespeare or a solution to a mathematical problem.

- 3.11 Pupils develop strong physical skills in the extensive sports programme and in co-curricular activities such as mountain biking and the running club. They improved their netball and football skills by playing in leagues created in school during the period when external matches were not possible. Whilst learning at home and in response to suggestions by their teachers, pupils recorded high levels of physical activity in their virtual physical education lessons and independently. Different pupils become innovative sculptors, committed tree planters and environmentalists, achievers in dramatic performance or skilled debaters in an atmosphere where all interests are embraced and developed. Achievements beyond school have included county representations in football, athletics, hockey and swimming, several selections for rugby club academies and national success in netball and badminton competitions. In 2019, over half of Year 10 pupils completed The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme bronze award. In the creative arts pupils embrace opportunities to perform and show high levels of individual and collaborative skill, whether by singing in the chapel choir, playing in instrumental ensembles, preparing highly imaginative artwork for the end-of-year exhibition or taking part in the dramatic performances for all age groups,

### **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 3.12 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.13 Pupils develop strong self-understanding and self-belief from an early age, meeting the school's stated aim to promote confidence in every pupil. This is because of the focus given to encouraging self-confidence by the school's leadership and the support provided by dedicated pastoral and academic staff. In the EYFS, children tackle new challenges with energy and enthusiasm and sustain their efforts over long periods of time, remaining fully engaged in self-directed tasks and those set by staff. During a session in the woodland, children chose their equipment with assurance and worked independently of others, seeking support when needed. Slightly older pupils in the prep school demonstrated strong self-confidence when acting out their rainforest story for the rest of the school. Pupils believe in their ability and take every opportunity to praise each other, thus increasing self-esteem in their peers. In doing so they respond well to the school's culture encompassing mutual respect and the celebration of success. In creative lessons throughout the school pupils successfully explore their own identity through sculpture, singing and drama. Pupils, including those with SEND, say that their self-confidence has grown significantly over their time in the school, due to careful strategies put in place to assist them. Senior school pupils spoke of the need to be resilient and persevere and felt that academic and personal targets negotiated with their tutors help them to understand their own strengths and weaknesses and work to improve. Pupils' personal development has been enhanced during recent remote learning through individualised, innovative and effective pastoral care.
- 3.14 Pupils of all ages are active and well-informed decision-makers. They make age-appropriate decisions about their learning, the activities they wish to pursue, subjects to study and their possible career paths. Children in the EYFS largely direct their days for themselves and understand that the enjoyment and success of their learning is dependent on the choices they make. Prep school pupils empathised with a character in literature who had had to make difficult decisions. Older pupils feel empowered to take control of their learning by deciding how to prioritise homework tasks and manage time effectively. Senior school pupils actively choose to attend workshops to aid their academic performance and can see how this has helped improve their outcomes. Collaborative decisions made with staff to change school uniform, or to purchase playground equipment enable pupils to understand the value of seeing things through to a conclusion.

- 3.15 Pupils value their surroundings and have a striking cognisance of the non-material aspects of life. The youngest children demonstrated real reverence for the natural world when handling creatures shaken out of a tree. Older prep school pupils took part in a mature discussion about consumerism, how to curb it and their responsibilities. They demonstrate an ability to think deeply and to reflect on contemporary issues. Pupils' spiritual understanding is enhanced by thoughtful assemblies and time in chapel where pupils acknowledge the usefulness of quiet reflection. They are supported in their development by the school's stress on the importance of Christian values in the broadest sense. As they progress through the school, pupils develop an understanding of and a sensitivity to the spiritual backgrounds of all members of the community. They describe many moments of joy and satisfaction, whether it be in creating a work of art, helping others or the interaction with their friends. Since returning from remote learning pupils exhibit a palpable sense of joy at being part of a community with a shared purpose again.
- 3.16 Pupils exhibit the qualities of being kind and respecting others and reflect the school ethos in general. Where a group of pupils demonstrates unacceptable behaviour, the school takes suitable action to remedy this. Pupils behave well overall and most have a good understanding of the concepts of right and wrong through their daily interactions with each other and adult members of the school community. In their questionnaire responses all the pupils agreed that the school has high expectations of their behaviour and almost all that the school responds to poor behaviour appropriately. Inspection evidence supports this view. Prep school and senior school pupils recognise the necessity for rules and think they are administered fairly. In discussion, they made the connection between rules in school and the laws by which society is run and which are necessary. Prep school pupils look up to those in the senior school and see them as highly positive role models.
- 3.17 Pupils collaborate very effectively within and across age groups in lessons and during activities. The youngest children work together instinctively, for example, when making dinner in a role play. Prep school pupils shared ideas and took inspiration from others when acting out an ancient battle and senior school pupils used peer assistance in class to solve problems. Pupils say that they value mixed gender sports teams which enable co-operation between male and female pupils. Pupils develop understanding of relationships, including between genders and through challenge by school leaders of any inappropriate attitudes or behaviours. Opportunities for teamwork enable pupils to develop inter-personal skills, whether playing sport in a school team or a game of touch rugby with staff. Pupils say that being in a team raises their individual skills and aids self-confidence. Historically pupils have had the opportunity to further develop their social skills by staying overnight in school for a themed experience involving adventurous activities outside in the woodland as well as a banquet. Themes have included *Super-Heroes* and *The Great Escape*. At present these nights are not possible due to restrictions, but pupils who have taken part speak of gaining friends and improving their social skills through interacting with each other and with adults.
- 3.18 Many senior pupils choose to spend time helping with younger pupils and in so doing enhance their own personal development as well as that of the children they support. The collective impact of such individual decisions helps to create the strong sense of community in the school. Pupils engage with the world outside school, choosing charitable causes and carrying out fund-raising activities as well as doing community work such as litter picking or maintaining a local village bench in previous years. During recent periods of remote learning pupils collaborated with each other to climb Everest virtually, by going up and down their stairs at home. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 valued the opportunity to explore recent global issues such as the Black Lives Matter movement; they gained effective understanding of racial inequality by listening to a remote talk by Nelson Mandela's prison guard, followed by a session on modern slavery. In discussion pupils expressed their appreciation of the diversity of religious beliefs in the school and that they felt it is a place where everyone is committed to supporting each other.
- 3.19 Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and healthy, including the importance of a healthy diet and how to maintain a positive outlook. During recent remote learning, they say they benefitted from well-being packs provided by staff. They found these were very helpful in enabling them to plan their days, include rest breaks and stay calm. They demonstrate a strong awareness and understanding of the importance of online safety because they are well educated about the risks. The school's policy of not allowing mobile phones was appreciated by pupils in discussion who said that they would rather play with their friends and enjoy being outside at break and lunchtimes.

## 2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

### Key findings

**2.1** The school does not meet all of the required standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.

#### **PART 1 – Quality of education provided**

**2.2** In the prep school, the school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).

**2.3** At GCSE in the years 2018 to 2020, performance has confirmed that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).

**2.4** The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.

**2.5** Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.

**2.6** The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.

#### **PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

**2.7** Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.

**2.8** The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [para 5] and NMS 17 and 19 are met.

#### **PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

**2.9** Good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.

**2.10** An appropriate induction process for pupils new to boarding is implemented, and suitable provision is made for boarders' medical and health care, their food and drink and for managing boarders' laundry and possessions. Boarders have suitable contact with friends and family and access to a programme of activities. Boarding staff are appropriately trained and deployed.

**2.11** The school did not follow correct procedures for the prompt referral of a recent safeguarding concern to the local authority and has not always ensured that staff appointed have at least two suitable references in place before they start work. The standard on child protection (NMS 11) is not met and represents a failure to safeguard boarders.

**2.12** The standards relating to welfare, health and safety in paragraphs 9-16 and the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 (accessibility plan), the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 and NMS 2-4, 6-10, 12, 15 and 16 are met, but those in paragraphs 7 and 8, NMS 11 and 14.1 are not met.

**PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors**

**2.13** The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required. Visitors to boarding accommodation are appropriately supervised.

**2.14** The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] and NMS 14.2 -6 are met.

**PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools**

**2.15** Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play. Boarding accommodation is adequate for the needs of all boarders, and safeguards and promotes their welfare.

**2.16** The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] and NMS 5 are met.

**PART 6 – Provision of information**

**2.17** A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website. A suitable statement of boarding principles and practice is published by the school.

**2.18** The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and NMS 1 are met.

**PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled**

**2.19** Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful, and identifying those relating to the boarding provision.

**2.20** The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] and NMS 18 are met.

**PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

**2.21** Appropriate leadership and management of boarding ensure that the required policies and records are maintained and effectively monitored.

**2.22** The proprietor has not always ensured that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils, including boarders. The proprietors have failed to ensure that the school always follows current statutory guidance for the acquisition of suitable, timely references and correct procedures for referring any safeguarding concerns to the local safeguarding authorities.

**2.23** The standard relating to leadership and management of the school in paragraph 34 and NMS 13 are not met.

To access a copy of the full combined inspection report, please click on the link [here](#).