



Assessment report: Stage 2: (Assessment Day)

School name and postcode:	St Edmund's Senior School and Sixth Form CT2 8HU
Assessment date:	22 nd April 2024
School Head Teacher:	Edward O'Connor
School More Able Coordinator:	Anya Bensberg, Stuart Masterson
NACE Assessor:	Dr Ann McCarthy

School context

- St Edmunds is a coeducational day and boarding school. The school has 349 Seniors and 109 in the Sixth Form. Day pupils come from the local area from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. Boarders represent about 20 nationalities most of which are western European.
- A significant number of pupils (119) have additional support for special educational needs with 9 having education health and care plans. 120 pupils speak English as an additional language with 56 receiving additional support such as specialist lessons. The school has identified 95 pupils as more able members of the school population. The curriculum is modified for these and for the 131 pupils who have talents in sports or creative arts.
- In 2023, there was a 99% pass rate at A level. The 9 to 4 pass rate at GCSE was 88%.
- In March 2023, the Independent Schools Inspectorate undertook a Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection. The report found the quality of pupils' academic and other achievements to be excellent. It stated that the majority of pupils make excellent progress from their starting points. Pupils, including those with EAL, were found to be excellent communicators with many also accomplished and articulate public speakers.

Summary of strengths for provision and outcomes

- Intellectual curiosity and a love for learning is valued highly at the school. Governors, leaders and teachers share the ambition that pupils will "find their path and grow to be all they can be."
- The school has a strong music, art and performing arts provision. In October 2023, they won the Performing Arts, Independent School of the Year Award. Some exceptionally able students compose or perform at professional or university levels.
- More able provision is led strategically by a deputy head with operational support from a more able coordinator. This has led to an ongoing development of provision and increased support for pupils and parents.
- Teachers have developed excellent practice through professional development, departmental teams, formal observations, shared resources, informal buddy systems and sharing best practice. Most recently, they have focused on examination board training and recognising barriers to learning.

- The very able and talented policy reflects the strong positive ethos and whole school approach to the education of more able and exceptionally able pupils. The action plan is being used effectively to introduce and refine classroom practices which enhance teaching and learning.
- There is a clear monitoring, review and evaluation cycle which includes the performance of the very able and talented cohort. Identification of more able and exceptionally able pupils is secure. The school makes use of standardised tests, prior attainment, baseline measures and transition information.
- Pupils receive ambitious targets which are routinely tracked and reviewed through whole school and departmental systems. When pupils underperform or need additional support, parents are contacted and individual help or attendance at subject clinics helps them to maintain good progress. In some subjects, stretch and challenge clinics help those aspiring to the highest grades.
- The school belongs to East Kent Schools Together Partnership through which more able and talented provision is being enhanced. There is an engagement with NACE hubs and webinars. The school reaches out to others by hosting a wide variety of events including an ethics morning, hockey tournaments, community singing workshops and an annual gala concert. Curiosity Shop and student societies offer a range of talks and external speakers who are invited into school on a range of topics including politics, intelligence, homelessness and philosophy. These opportunities are publicised and offered to local schools.
- Older students identified as being more able said the school culture recognises that everyone has unique capabilities which can be developed and shared with others. They feel it is their responsibility to help others using the abilities and talents that they possess. Younger pupils have found that being identified as more able has given them greater confidence and they feel free to achieve more.
- Pupils said that teachers are always available to answer their questions and help them to learn well. They said there is always something to improve on and teachers are very good at finding routes for improvement.
- Some pupils with specialist interests are given additional support and opportunities to study and experience their specialisms in greater depth. Stretch and challenge talks take them beyond the confines of the examination curriculum. Older students said that their teachers have incredible knowledge and always know the answer or can point them in the direction of an answer. They provide students with additional reading materials and help them to prepare for applications to prestigious universities. For those interested in alternative routes, the school provides information and advice to enable them to achieve their ambitions.
- Parents acknowledge the ways in which the school helps pupils to create a healthy balance in their studies. When they have talents which require additional practice such as music, performing arts or sport they are given help to manage their time and maintain their good progress in the academic curriculum.
- Pupils say that they are asked for their opinions and school leaders listen to them. They receive feedback on the actions taken in response to their requests.
- Parents feel well supported by the school. They receive regular information on their children's learning. When they have a query or concern, teachers take time to respond and act promptly.
- The case study was designed to improve the quality of feedback and increase the time given to pupils' reflections and responses. Where this approach to assessment was seen, pupils were creating meaningful links between ideas and thinking more deeply. Their understanding of learning criteria and the quality of their work has developed significantly.

Summary of strengths for teaching and learning

Five lessons were observed, these were Year 9 Art and English, Year 10 Spanish, Year 11 Biology and Year 13 Politics.

- In all lessons pupils were interested and engaged in their learning. The teachers focused on developing both knowledge of subject content and skills needed to apply this knowledge successfully. In all lessons there was a focus on the teacher's expertise. The success of the lessons built on skilful teaching and strong interpersonal relationships.
- Teacher subject knowledge and expertise is a strength of the school.
- In politics, pupils learnt how to develop arguments through the use of synoptic links and analysis. They could draw from past learning in other modules to develop their thinking. One student commented that during the holidays he had watched a significant number of news and current affairs programmes and has become increasingly aware of the similarities in issues around the world.
- In English, pupils were given time to respond independently to detailed and precise feedback which challenged them to take their learning forward and develop greater independence in their learning. They focused on language, structure and form as they tried to establish the tactics or devices used by Shakespeare in the *Tempest*, the nature of relationships in the play and what was revealed about Prospero.
- In Art, pupils were encouraged to develop their own success criteria, to make constructive comments about the work of their peers and to take risks in developing their skills.
- In science, pupils were asked to explain and extend responses drawing from prior learning. The materials provided enabled them to extend their learning independently through well-structured information and tasks. The learning was scaffolded from define, explain, describe to more complex discussions on scientific ethics.
- In Spanish, the pupils were taught through the target language. The teacher skilfully encouraged pupils to attempt responses by using their existing knowledge to help them to recognise key words. Working cooperatively with their peers, they were then able to use language patterns and rules to interpret new phrases.
- The assessment strategy is designed to create opportunities for pupils to respond to challenging feedback and develop metacognition. A sample of books from all year groups and across all subjects was taken. The work was challenging and engaging. Marking and feedback helped pupils to develop their ideas and improve their outcomes.
- Parents spoke enthusiastically about the leadership opportunities available to pupils. They felt that older students provide exceptional role models for younger pupils. They raise aspirations and inspire others. Younger pupils respect their talent and enthusiasm.

Areas for development

- Currently the school has a curriculum policy, supported by core teaching concepts and professional development. The next step is to formalise these practices alongside assessment practice into a teaching, learning and assessment policy. This will lead to observed practice becoming embedded across all areas of learning.
- In the lessons observed, pupils were provided with a variety of challenging tasks. School leaders are working with teachers to improve the consistency of challenge in classrooms so that more able and exceptionally able pupils have appropriate opportunities to deepen and extend their learning in all lessons.
- Recently introduced assessment practices have been established across most areas of learning. The challenge is now to use feedback and response activities to encourage greater choice and independence in learning.

- The identification of potentially more able and exceptionally able pupils using an understanding of learning attributes is developing and will enhance the identification process already in place.
- The school has refined the Scholars' programme to a newly named Stretch and Challenge programme. As this develops, a greater number of highly able pupils will gain access to enrichment subject talks, competitions, and a Local to Global Programme and symposia. The engagement of pupils in a wide variety of activities beyond the timetabled curriculum has led to there being a need for a central and more holistic record of pupils' engagement in these opportunities. This will allow teachers to work more closely with pupils and their parents to provide bespoke support.
- The school has good support systems in place but plans to increase the focus on learners who experience any form of disadvantage in order to help all pupils "to be all they can be."
- A review of homework policy is planned so that teaching, learning and assessment initiatives extend beyond the classroom.

Key issues (*key action points to be included on the school's Key Issues Matrix*)

- Develop a new teaching, learning and assessment policy to formalise the good practice which has been introduced through development of the policy for more able, teaching concepts and assessment practices.
- Develop a consistent understanding and approach to cognitive challenge in the classroom.
- Continue to develop the feedback and marking strategy so that pupils become increasingly able to make learning choices and work independently.
- Introduce a central record of pupil engagement in activities within and beyond the classroom to develop a holistic understanding of engagement and personal development.

Challenge check-in due (+18 months): October 2025

Reaccreditation application deadline (+3 years): April 2027

Lead assessor's signature:



Dr Ann McCarthy