

Etone College



High standards underpin all that we do



Ilan Smith, head teacher

Based in Nuneaton, Etone College is a secondary school in the Matrix Academy Trust for pupils aged 11-19. What makes this school unique is the speed with which it has progressed. They have recently attained a 'good' rating by Ofsted, which is just one of the bodies that have recognised their excellence – a significant achievement given that, in very recent memory, the school was placed in 'special measures' (2013). Just three years later, this same school received national recognition for progress, placing them in the top 14 per cent of schools nationally – a remarkable feat for such a short space of time. Never has there been a better time for pupils to join Etone College on its journey of progression, something that Ian Smith, head teacher, who joined the school at Easter 2015, describes in greater detail below.

Knowing strengths

Rapid progression requires a school to take a fresh approach – one that is incisively informed by a thorough sense of what it already does well and how it needs to improve. At Etone College, we've always prided ourselves on our traditional values of good manners, courtesy and respect with a "no excuses" culture. Pupils constantly reflect on their choices, how much their choices were in their control and how they might have chosen differently. This is accompanied by a keen sense of responsibility and numerous opportunities for pupils to participate and take ownership of their own learning. Our strong pastoral system has undoubtedly

REPORT CARD ETONE COLLEGE

- » Head teacher: Ian Smith
- » Location: Etone, Nuneaton
- » Type of school: secondary comprehensive with a sixth form
- » No. of pupils: 750
- » No. of staff: 80
- » Has quickly progressed from the Ofsted rating of 'Special measures' to 'Good'
- » In the top 10 highest performing academies nationally
- » www.etonecollege.co.uk



Paris trip 2018

“We’ve been able to transform learning and outcomes for our pupils because of the real team ethos running through our school”

underpinned our success, and while it doesn’t always yield the same obviously measurable outcomes as other measures, it has provided the foundations on which we have been able to build.

High quality pedagogy now pervades the school, with a strong emphasis placed on measurable outcomes, set in a culture where only the best is good enough. In practice, this means highly effective teaching and learning, rigorously planned quality assurance and the regular and diagnostic use of pupil data. By measuring and evaluating our outcomes and through high quality professional dialogue and CPD, we are able to inform our next stage of planning and facilitate recursive improvements year on year. The “devil is in the detail” – looking closely not only to ensure that the basics are in place and completed to a minimum expected standard but that we are also constantly improving all aspects of our practice.

Aspirations for and expectations of our pupils are very high and we work continually to ensure that pupils share the same sense of belief in their own abilities. We look to provide them with opportunity – wanting to be the means by which they realise their ambitions and potential. Rewards, closely aligned

to progress and participation, and the strong pastoral system have been pivotal to this success as have links to external providers such as universities, which all constantly encourage our pupils to aim high.

Curriculum relevance and clear progression pathways are also key to engagement and therefore success. Our curriculum rationale is simple: based around clearly transferable employability skills that allow our pupils to make progress within school and be equipped for their appropriate next steps. We celebrate the successes of our pupils, with regular, high profile events now the norm. At the heart of everything we do is a belief that we will provide the highest possible level of education provision while meeting the specific needs of our community – a local school to meet the needs of local people.

Maintaining a close point of contact with parents, our feeder schools and the community has also been central to our improvement, and we now enjoy a much better reputation in the local area as a result. We recognise the crucial role that parents and carers have had in our success – playing greater roles in their children’s progress and achievements. We are now the first choice of many – moving from a rapidly falling roll to admission numbers that have doubled, now being the highest they have ever been.

Improvement

A key strength is also positive contributions from all stakeholders: “everybody benefits because everybody contributes”. We’ve been able to transform learning and outcomes for our pupils because of the real team ethos running through our school – teaching and non-teaching staff alike – whose common purpose is to improve experiences and outcomes for pupils. Our staff work hard to



Wilmott Dixon site visit

secure improvement for pupils and we, in return, work hard to secure improvements for staff.

One aspect of this is CPD with a recognition that staff at different stages of their career have different needs. These efforts ensure that our teachers have the necessary skills to improve learning. Ultimately, we want our staff to have the opportunities to grow and improve. Part and parcel of this process is the chance for us to recognise strong practitioners and elevate them in terms of leadership. This fits with our school strapline of “progress for all” – a statement to which we have a very real and genuine commitment.

Although we’ve undergone enormous improvement, there are still challenges. Curriculum change is often rapid, often providing insufficient time for schools to adapt. Teacher recruitment is also difficult, particularly in certain subjects, and while we have successfully engaged with SCITT programmes to “grow our own”, we are acutely aware of the uncertainty that surrounds teacher recruitment both now and in the future.

The future

We see collaboration as key to our future success, and are proud to be part of the Matrix Academy Trust. As such, we have been afforded opportunities to share and learn best practice. We enjoy the status of being part of the 7th highest performing academy chain in the country. Collaboration is an area we’d like to grow, not least by establishing links within Nuneaton – only good things can come from partnerships with other schools. We’ve already worked hard to re-establish curriculum links with our primary feeder schools and developing further links with other schools would be particularly helpful, particularly as we would all be familiar with challenges specific to our region.



Duke of Edinburgh Award

Looking to the future, we want to continue our successful journey. Complacency does not exist at Etone. At the risk of tempting fate, we constantly strive to be an Ofsted ‘outstanding’ school. Until then, we plan to expand our work with other schools, utilise the forthcoming new build and further increase our numbers while never losing our focus on traditional values and progress. We want to be known as a leading school in our area that meets the needs of the pupils, the parents and the broader community. More than that though, we want to be the school where there is truly “progress for all”.

“We enjoy the status of being in the top 10 for the highest performing academies nationally”

Year 11 Prom Class of 2018

