

East London Independent Special School

Independent school standard inspection report

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| DfE registration number | 316/6072 |
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| Inspection number | 364149 |
| Inspection dates | 10–11 November 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Daniel Towl HMI |

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

The East London Independent School opened in September 2009 and was registered in 2010. It is situated in Maryland near Stratford. It is a co-educational day school for students, aged from seven to 16 years of age, who have behavioural and emotional difficulties. About one third have additional speech, language or communication difficulties. There are 20 students on roll. All the students have a statement of special educational needs. Just under half of the students have Black or mixed ethnic heritages. All of the students have had significantly disrupted previous schooling. The school aims to 'provide a safe and nurturing environment in which all students can flourish'. This is the school's first inspection.

Evaluation of the school

The overall education provided by the school is good and the school has made a successful start, broadly meeting its aims. It offers a safe and effective alternative for students who have had very disrupted mainstream schooling. Teaching and learning are good overall and this means that the majority of students make good progress in their academic studies. Students' personal development is good. Provision for welfare, health and safety and safeguarding are outstanding. The school meets all the regulations. Parents and local authorities who place pupils are very satisfied with the school's provision.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. There is a clear focus on academic study and a wide range of activities which help students develop their social and emotional skills. All students enter the school with attainment in basic skills that is below what would be normally expected for their age. There is an appropriate emphasis on English and mathematics and the majority of students are now making good and sometimes outstanding progress in their basic skills. Even for those making satisfactory progress, this represents a significant improvement on previous achievements. The school is clear in its commitment to ensure that students leave school with appropriate qualifications for their next stage of education or employment. In Key

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

Stages 3 and 4 students have the chance to enter a number of examinations including GSCE, Award Scheme Development Accreditation Network (ASDAN), AQA activity awards and the Diploma in Digital Applications (DiDA). They can also gain accreditation in first aid, the English Speaking Board and food hygiene among others.

Students' creativity is successfully stimulated in art and music. Drama also forms an important part of the students' experience. All students have regular opportunities for physical education. They visit off-site centres and take part in swimming, gym activities and other sports such as wall climbing. The school offers a 'well-being' course in which students learn to use massage as a therapeutic exercise for themselves and others. Students show confidence in using computers. They regularly use the interactive teaching boards to show their ideas or answers and use laptop computers to support their studies both within the general curriculum and for specific accredited information and communication technology (ICT) courses.

The curriculum is suitably enhanced by visits to a wide range of places, including the Natural History and Science Museums and St Paul's Cathedral. Students also visit an outdoor centre where they meet their peers from two partner schools and take part in adventurous activities and competitions. There is a full programme of personal, social and health education including citizenship. This feature of the curriculum is not just a series of isolated lessons. Social and moral issues are referred to in most lessons as part of the process to support students' ongoing personal development.

Some students have significant difficulty in coping within a school or even a small group environment. Where appropriate, they are given the opportunity to work off site with outreach tutors and teachers. The outreach programme allows students to continue their studies in both academic and vocational activities. As part of the reintegration to school, outreach students may also access some of the non-academic activities at the school prior to their full-time return. This provision is managed effectively and establishes good links with outside student support agencies.

Teaching and assessment are good. The quality of lessons ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. Staff are very skilled at managing students' behaviour and are alert to their changing moods and attitudes. Teachers and teaching assistants are excellent role models showing politeness, respect and care at all times. Staffing ratios are high and, with the current number on roll, class sizes are small. This means that students receive significant amounts of individual attention. In the best lessons the teachers' good subject knowledge and effective teamwork with the teaching assistant enables students to learn effectively, developing both academic and personal skills. In an outstanding drama lesson, under the guidance of the teacher, a student and teaching assistant successfully explored feelings and emotions following the study of part of the play, *Blood Brothers*. In another lesson, a teacher presented a student with stimulating enlarged photographs of insects to help develop vocabulary for writing while the teaching assistant effectively supported the student to spell accurately.

Not all lessons are as effective as they could be. Sometimes the learning objectives are not clearly explained and the activities and tasks are not focused enough to make the best use of the time available. This means that too little time is spent on the key learning points and progress is more limited. All teachers give good opportunities for students to provide answers to questions and invite them to give their views. This is usually effective because, whereas students are less willing to write, they are usually willing to give verbal responses. Students' progress in writing and in the presentation of their work is not as strong as in other aspects of their learning.

Teachers regularly mark students' work. Though variable in quality, most marking gives helpful comments about how students can improve their work. Procedures for assessing students' progress are good. A computerised assessment program gives helpful information about how well students are doing in basic skills in English, mathematics, science and ICT. The school is also successfully developing teachers' skills in assessing students' work using National Curriculum levels and this is helping to identify gaps in learning more accurately. The school is aware that it needs to continue to develop all teachers' skills in this area, particularly in assessing students' writing. All students have appropriately challenging targets based on improving their National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. Most students are happy to come to school. The majority of students have improved their attendance, sometimes dramatically. Although overall attendance remains below what would be expected nationally, it demonstrates students' greater commitment to learning. This has a very positive impact on their academic progress and reflects the school's endeavour to providing a caring and safe environment and an interesting range of activities. The school is successful in improving students' behaviour which is good overall. In most lessons behaviour is good and this means that there is little interruption to learning. However, students do occasionally have outbursts of poor behaviour or refuse to comply. The staff are skilful in handling these occasions and are successful in getting students to consider the implications of their actions leading to them engaging again with their learning. These incidents reduce in number significantly as the school year progresses.

Students' personal development is good. They successfully improve their attitudes and show that they can relate well to their peers and adults, for example, in the whole-school 'group process' sessions and assemblies. Personal achievements are celebrated daily and allow students to achieve acclaim for their own successes and to celebrate the achievements of others. They readily share ideas, present concerns and accept comments from their peers. During an outstanding assembly, led by the deputy headteacher, students were invited to discuss issues related to Armistice Day. Several students answered questions, offered suitable comments and also gave

spontaneous encouragement to each other. It was a thoughtful and moving occasion.

Students are beginning accept more responsibility, for example, instead of a member staff leading the daily whole-school 'group process', students volunteered to lead the meeting and did so successfully. The recently established 'student voice' group also provides a means for students to express their views about school. Overall, good progress in improving basic skills, better attitudes and attendance and the opportunities to build self-esteem through achieving school awards and taking part in activities, such as the Prince's Trust XL activity leadership scheme, successfully support students towards their next steps in education or employment and their future economic well-being. Students told the lead inspector that they thought the school helped them to be more tolerant.

Cultural development is achieved through a range of activities such as celebrating local diversity in music compositions, theatre visits and a Caribbean food event as part of Black History month, links with charitable foundations and visits to places of worship.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. Policies for health and safety, child protection and safeguarding are thorough. The school's procedures for appointing staff are rigorous, ensuring that all the appropriate checks are carried out prior to appointment. Staff induction procedures ensure that all staff are made aware of policies, procedures and personal responsibilities on matters of welfare, health and safety. All staff have been trained in child protection to an appropriate level. Risk assessments for health and safety are comprehensive, including weekly assessments that consider beforehand the activities that students will be involved in. Staff carefully consider how students may react to unfamiliar situations. Fire risk assessments are detailed and there are regular fire drills and checks on equipment.

Staff are very alert to any bullying issues. There have been some incidents of bullying but school policies are followed carefully and matters are dealt with quickly. Overall, students feel safe. One parent whose child was bullied confirmed to the lead inspector that the matter had been dealt with effectively.

Students are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles. Regular physical education lessons give students opportunities to exercise, sometimes with more adventurous activities. Through the personal, social and health education curriculum students learn about and consider the dangers of substance misuse and have also started a number of sessions about knife crime with a local community group. Breakfast sessions, food technology lessons and gaining food hygiene awards help students to understand the importance of healthy eating. The school has worked successfully with individual students to help them improve their health through exercise and diet. Students have regular one-to-one sessions with key staff, for example, with the head

of pastoral care, during which they can discuss any personal issues of welfare and health. The school has excellent links with a wide range of external services and groups, all of whom help to provide very effective support and safety networks for students.

The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, amended by the Special Educational Needs & Disability Act 2001.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The required single central staff register is detailed and holds all the information it should in order to show that the required checks have been carried out on the suitability of staff to work with children.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The premises are well maintained and the environment is enhanced by displays of students' work and photographs. Classrooms are of a good size. The building provides a safe environment and one that enables effective learning to take place. The proprietor has plans to improve the day-to-day outdoor provision by adapting rooftop spaces to make them suitable for small games, horticulture and areas in which to relax at break times.

Provision of information

The school provides a wide range of information for students and parents who are admitted to the school. There is regular contact with parents and the local authorities who place their students at the school.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has clear procedures for handling complaints. There have been no formal complaints in the last 12 months.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all the requirements.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- Improve the quality and presentation of students' written work.
- Improve teachers' skills in assessing writing.

Inspection judgements

| outstanding | good | satisfactory | inadequate |
|-------------|------|--------------|------------|
|-------------|------|--------------|------------|

The quality of education

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|--|--|---|--|--|
| Overall quality of education | | ✓ | | |
| How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils | | ✓ | | |
| How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs | | ✓ | | |
| How well pupils make progress in their learning | | ✓ | | |

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | | ✓ | | |
| The behaviour of pupils | | ✓ | | |

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

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|--|---|--|--|--|
| The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils | ✓ | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|

School details

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| School status | Independent | | |
| Type of school | Special day | | |
| Date school opened | 2010 | | |
| Age range of pupils | 7–16 | | |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | | |
| Number on roll (full-time pupils) | Boys: 17 | Girls: 3 | Total: 20 |
| Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs | Boys: 17 | Girls: 3 | Total: 20 |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £ 48,000 | | |
| Address of school | 1 Ibex House, 1c Maryland Park, Stratford, London E15 1HB | | |
| Telephone number | 020 8221 1247 | | |
| Email address | Cheryl.Rutter@tces.org.uk | | |
| Headteacher | Ms Cheryl Rutter | | |
| Proprietor | Mr Thomas Keaney | | |