

Estuary High School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	David Young

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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

Estuary High School is a special school for a maximum of six boys, between 13 and 18 years of age, with emotional and behavioural difficulties which are related to the severe challenges they have experienced, leading to break down in schooling and family life. There are currently four boys on roll, each of whom has a statement of special educational needs. All students are looked after children and placed here currently by two local authorities. The school, which opened in January 2007, is part of Kites Children's Services Limited which caters for various aspects of the needs of adolescent males. The headteacher, who is also the main class teacher, was absent from school during the inspection. The school was last inspected in June 2008.

The school aims to provide, 'a learning environment which will enable students to have a full range of educational activities, both within the school and the wider community, within a supportive framework involving encouragement, therapy, self-awareness and discipline'. This is based on the philosophy that, 'despite their difficulties, all students have the potential to become fully active, productive and safe members of the wider community, with positive and meaningful roles to play'.

Evaluation of the school

Estuary High School provides a good quality of education and meets its aims successfully. Students enjoy the wide range of opportunities provided through the curriculum, including vocational and sporting activities in the wider community. Arrangements for safeguarding, together with those for welfare, health and safety of students, are outstanding. Students' behaviour is good and the school successfully promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school has developed its provision effectively since the last inspection and now meets the requirements of all but two of the regulations.

Quality of education

The school's curriculum is good and provides an appropriate balance between academic, work-related and practical activities. There is an appropriate emphasis on the teaching of basic skills. English, mathematics and science feature prominently in

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

the daily timetable and students are successful in their entries for external examinations in these subjects. However, the current schemes of work do not provide a comprehensive and consistent picture of the continuity and progression of knowledge and skills in all the subjects of the school's curriculum. The requirements of students' statements of special educational needs are mostly met effectively and reflected in their individual education plans. Students in Key Stage 3 have access to all National Curriculum subjects, although the amount of music and modern foreign languages taught has varied over time depending upon the availability of suitably qualified staff. The requirements of statements of special educational needs are reviewed regularly and all appropriate parties are consulted and informed regularly about students' progress. Excellent courses in art and food studies provide important aesthetic and therapeutic opportunities, together with access to further external accreditation. Good use is made of individual therapy sessions which contribute to students' ability to focus on the demands of their educational activities. Outstanding aspects of the school's curriculum are the range of outdoor activities, organised under the title of Estuary Challenges, and the Estuary Enterprise scheme which has resulted in the achievement of national awards through the Young Enterprise organisation. Students take on a high level of responsibility and independence in both of these programmes. An additional feature of this work is the excellent video productions, produced by students, which are used in presentations to promote the work of the school and its parent company. A proportion of the students' achievements in life skills, citizenship and related subjects, is not currently rewarded through nationally recognised accreditation.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. A major strength of the teaching is the extent to which learning activities are individualised to meet the personal needs of boys of different ages and previous educational experience. The staff work very effectively together to prepare and implement well-planned and appropriately paced lessons. Teachers and teaching assistants share the responsibility for challenging and supporting students with their individual and small group learning activities. As a result, students take an active part in their own learning by concentrating, asking appropriate questions and completing a variety of written and practical tasks. In an effective art lesson, each student was engaged in individual drawing and sketching, including the preparation of projects for GCSE entry by Year 11 students. A class discussion about how views of smoking have changed over recent decades included reflective and thoughtful contributions from all students. The good teaching of science includes appropriate and interesting opportunities for practical experimentation and students are encouraged to reflect, for example, on the features of fair testing. Good use is made of National Curriculum levels and GCSE criteria in the assessment of students' work. Students are aware of the levels at which they are working and of their individual targets for improvement. Information and communication technology is used as an effective tool to aid learning but is not used extensively in the recording and presentation of students' work.

As a result of the good range of opportunities provided and the quality of the teaching, students make good progress in their learning. Current students have achieved success, by the end of Year 10, in functional skills examinations in English and mathematics, together with creditable GCSE grades in mathematics and science.

They are now working towards additional examination entries at the end of Year 11. Students in Key Stage 3 demonstrate evidence of appropriate improvement in their National Curriculum levels in a range of subjects. Students who left the school in summer 2011 have progressed to courses in further education where they continue to achieve success. The school's educational provision makes a strong contribution to the preparation of students for life after school.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. The aims and ethos of the parent company, and the manner in which students' experiences at home and at school are integrated, ensure that students' personal development is given an appropriate emphasis. Students benefit enormously from the range of practical activities within and beyond the school day and these make an important contribution to the development of their self-esteem and confidence. Students' attendance at school is excellent and their enjoyment of many of their experiences is evident. Students' behaviour is good and characterised by cooperation and mutual respect. In their responses to the inspection questionnaires, students state that they feel safe in school, that the teaching is good and that teachers explain to them how they can achieve more. The points reward system provides good opportunities for students to reflect on their behaviour and contribution to the daily life of the school. Occasional important lessons are learned when maximum points are not earned as a result of lapses in attitude.

Students have good opportunities to develop their awareness of their own culture and community through trips to museums, theatres and civic venues. They contribute to the local community through gardening at a local residential home and through charitable collections. Appropriate activities within the curriculum enable them to understand the diversity of cultures in Britain and to consider issues of racism and exclusion. Good work on bullying also encourages students to reflect on their attitudes towards others in the school and local community. The Enterprise Challenge is a particularly effective opportunity for students to work together, to manage real-life decisions and to develop appropriate relationships with members of the wider community. They are justifiably proud of their achievements in this continuing project.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of students are outstanding. The integrated approach to policy, procedures and training between the school and students' homes is a major strength. All aspects of child protection and risk assessment are understood by all adults having contact with students. Within the school, staff training is up to date and at the appropriate levels for child protection, first aid and fire safety. Procedures for the recruitment of staff are comprehensive and implemented consistently. All aspects of fire safety and premises health and safety are documented, maintained and reviewed systematically. The school implements effectively a range of policies and procedures for the management of behaviour, visits out of school and the prevention of bullying. Risk assessments are

completed and regularly reviewed for activities within and beyond school, taking appropriate account of the individual needs and circumstances of students. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school has appropriate arrangements for checking the suitability of all staff and the members of the proprietorial body. Details of all checks are recorded on the required single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The main school classroom is an appropriately sized room in the grounds of a detached house. Additional classrooms are located in the house, including suitable space for practical activities such as art, cooking and science. These facilities provide an appropriate environment for safe and effective learning. There is a small outside space which is well used for recreation, and good use is made of nearby parks and additional facilities for play and sports.

Provision of information

The school provides all required information for parents and carers through accessible and up-to-date documentation. All the required policies are made available on request. Parents and carers receive a mid-year and an end-of-year report on the progress of their child; these provide a comprehensive account of students' academic and personal development.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's policy and procedures for the management of any complaint meet regulatory requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the quality of education provided (standards in part 1) and must:

- ensure that the curriculum policy is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for each subject (paragraph 2(1))
- ensure that where students have a statement of special educational needs the education provided fulfils its requirements (paragraph 2(2)(e)).

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made.

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Provide a wider range of opportunities for the use of information and communication technology to support the recording and presentation of students' work.
- Ensure that the full range of students' experiences, including those beyond the school premises, are recorded and accredited appropriately.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

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

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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School details

School status	Independent
Type of school	Secondary special school for boys with emotional and social difficulties.
Date school opened	January 2007
Age range of pupils	13–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 4
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 4
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 4
Fees (day pupils)	£666 a week
Email address	Kerry@kitescs.com
Headteacher	Sue Green
Proprietor	Kites Children's Services Limited

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



8 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Estuary High School

Thank you for your welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed my visit, including the opportunity to see you at work and to talk with you about your experience. The inspection judged that Estuary High School provides you with a good quality of education and helps you with both your academic and personal development. I was particularly pleased to see:

- that your questionnaires show that you recognise that teaching is good and that the staff help you to improve
- the way in which you show respect to the staff and work effectively together
- the outstanding way in which you run the Enterprise Challenge and the national awards which you have achieved
- your enthusiasm for the Estuary Challenges and how these help you to take on responsibility and work well together
- the qualifications which older students have already achieved and your continued work towards further examinations
- the good progress you are all making, particularly in your art, English, maths and science.

To bring about further improvement I have asked the proprietor and staff to continue to develop Estuary High by providing more opportunities to use computers for the recording and presentation of your work, and to introduce further awards for all the practical and outdoor activities which you do. You can help to get the best out of Estuary High by continuing your excellent attendance and by continuing to prepare yourselves well for the future.

With all best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Young
Lead Inspector