

East London Independent Special School

Welfare Road, Stratford, London E15 4HT

Inspection dates 25–27 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Pupils' achievement	Outstanding	1
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Quality of curriculum	Outstanding	1
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

This school is outstanding because

- As a result of excellent teaching, students make outstanding progress with their learning, having entered the school with standards of achievement which are well below those expected for their age.
- High expectations from staff and the excellent quality of care provided enable students to make outstanding progress with the management of their behaviour and attitudes to work.
- The school provides an excellent range of learning activities and experiences which prepare students exceptionally well for external examinations and for life after school.
- The school provides an outstanding quality of care and learning experiences for students with autistic spectrum conditions.
- Arrangements for the safety and well-being of students are implemented consistently and rigorously, providing students with exemplary levels of care and individual support.
- The school's proprietor and leadership team communicate an outstanding vision of success for underachieving and disaffected young people, which is shared and implemented consistently by all members of staff.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was conducted with one day's notice. The inspector observed 11 lessons taught by nine teachers. All lessons were jointly observed with members of the school's senior management team.
- Meetings were held with the proprietor and members of the management team; the school's improvement partner; the school's clinical and inclusion team; and members of the student council. Additional informal conversations were held with members of staff and students.
- School questionnaires submitted by a number of parents were considered, together with questionnaire responses from 28 members of staff.
- A wide range of school documentation was considered, including policies, students' work, photographic evidence, and records of students' progress, attendance and incidents.
- At the request of the Department for Education, consideration was given to a material change application to add new premises, to extend the age range up to 18 years, and to increase the registered maximum number of students to 119.

Inspection team

David Young, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- East London Independent School is located on two sites in the Custom House and Stratford areas of Newham, East London.
- It is a day special school providing for boys and girls who experience behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. In addition, there is a specialist provision for students with autistic spectrum conditions on one of the sites.
- The school is registered to take up to 91 students in the age range seven to 17 years. There are no post-16 students on roll at present.
- There are currently 63 students on the roll of the school, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. Twenty two students have autistic spectrum conditions and 10 are in the care of their local authorities.
- The school makes use of nearby additional provision at 'Skillshop' for vocational courses in the construction trades. Additional off-site locations are also used regularly for physical education, sports and equine care courses.
- The school's vision is 'to provide the highest quality education services, which are personalised and achievement driven, to ensure our pupils are supported to achieve the best possible outcomes and their full potential'.
- The school was last inspected by Ofsted in November 2010.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the success of the accredited courses at Key Stage 4 by raising the number of students achieving Level 2 awards.
- Further develop strategies for improving the attendance and progress of the small number of persistent absentees.
- Ensure that students' learning is extended by:
 - consistent clarity in teachers' verbal explanations of new ideas and information
 - ensuring that instructions for the completion of tasks by students are precise and unambiguous
 - modelling answers to provide clear expectations of how students are to complete independent learning tasks.
- Extend the range of vocational and work-related opportunities available to Key Stage 4 and post-16 students.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Outstanding

Students' achievement is outstanding and they make excellent progress with their learning over time. All students enter the school with levels of attainment below those expected for their age. This results from disrupted previous educational experience and, often, significant periods of time out of education. Almost all students in all year groups are making progress at a rate which is at least in line with expected rates of progress. Nearly three-quarters of students' assessment results in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) exceed expected rates of progress over time. As a result of excellent teaching, patient encouragement and high expectations, they re-engage with education and rapidly catch up with the basic skills required for effective learning. Progress for the majority in literacy and numeracy is outstanding. They are helped to develop confidence in their reading and writing skills, and use these effectively to produce work of a standard which they did not believe possible. Students use ICT as a regular part of their learning in a number of subjects; they demonstrate well-developed skills in researching new information and presenting their work with the aid of a variety of software programs.

Students achieve increasing levels of success in external examinations and awards. A number of students have achieved entry level 3 awards in various aspects of construction and those in Key Stage 4 are now extending these achievements successfully to levels equivalent to foundation GCSE grades. Increasing numbers of students are achieving success across a range of grades at GCSE although, to date, these have not included many grades at C and above. All leavers in the last two years have moved on to successful placements in further education colleges or employment. Rapid rates of progress and the acquisition of new knowledge and understanding were strongly evident in lessons observed during this inspection. The quality of learning for vulnerable groups, including those on the autistic spectrum and students in the care of their local authorities, is in line with that of their peers. The school demonstrates considerable success in re-engaging students from previous disaffection and non-attendance.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Outstanding

The behaviour and personal development of students are outstanding as a result of the high expectations and quality of care demonstrated by the staff. Students develop self-confidence and the ability to behave appropriately with adults. The school has a positive approach to the management of students' behaviour and students appreciate the reward system which recognises their improved behaviour. The school's records show a clear reduction in the number of incidents of serious misbehaviour over time; students comment with pride on the progress they have made with their ability to manage frustration and anger. Individual students' records also demonstrate a reduction in the number of exclusions for serious misbehaviour as they adjust to the high expectations of the staff. Overall attendance has improved from 78% to 86% in the last 12 months, despite poor attendance by a small number of persistent absentees. While attendance remains below the national average, it shows outstanding improvement from records of students' attendance at previous placements. There is no evidence of bullying and students state that they feel safe in school. The proprietor and staff have ensured outstanding quality in the integration of the educational, therapeutic and clinical services provided by the school. Challenges and traumas in individual students' lives are promptly identified and effective interventions are put in place rapidly.

Arrangements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students are exemplary. Students are provided with excellent opportunities to contribute to the school community and they state that they have a genuine voice in decisions through the school council. Members of the school council demonstrate considerable maturity and the ability to be thoughtful and reflective in

their relationships with adults. Students enjoy opportunities for involvement in the local community, including providing Christmas gifts for local elderly residents, and arranging a sponsored one-mile run in aid of Sports Relief. Recent visitors to the school include presentations as diverse as drugs awareness, relationships education, an 'X-Factor' celebrity and an introduction to Tae Kwon Do. Students are provided with the opportunity to gain first aid qualifications. The school also ensures that students develop their cultural awareness and respect for diversity, through themes in assemblies and religious education lessons and the celebration of Black History Month.

Quality of teaching

Outstanding

The quality of teaching is outstanding overall and enables students to make excellent progress with their learning. The teaching staff have a strong and appropriate focus on students' learning in the planning of their lessons and the assessment of students' work. Teachers plan activities and tasks which interest and engage students. They identify students' individual levels of attainment in their lesson plans and provide a range of challenging tasks which enable each student to take an active part in the lesson and to make excellent progress. The teaching staff make excellent use of visual resources and practical learning opportunities which are carefully matched to students' preferred learning styles and enable them to experience success. Teachers and learning support assistants regularly discuss students' current assessment levels with them and encourage them to take the next steps towards challenging targets. The objectives set for each lesson are clear and communicated helpfully to students. Occasionally, teachers' explanations of new ideas, and instructions for the completion of tasks are not sufficiently clear, resulting in some uncertainty among the students. However, teachers and support staff intervene quickly and are skilled at helping students to manage their behaviour, frustration and potential disaffection.

Teachers provide high quality written feedback to students in the marking of their work. Considerable praise and reward is appropriately balanced with clear targets to extend students' learning. The school's improvement partner has made a significant, positive contribution to the development of teaching, assessment and the setting of realistic targets. The school has made considerable progress with strategies for the assessment of students' work, as a result of excellent opportunities for staff training and teamwork. Online assessment software is used wisely as one component of the assessment process and teaching staff are increasingly confident in the assessment of students' work, using National Curriculum levels and external examination criteria.

Quality of curriculum

Outstanding

The curriculum is outstanding and provides students with experiences which they enjoy and which prepare them well for life after school. The requirements of students' statements of special educational needs are well represented in the range of National Curriculum subjects provided and in the excellent opportunities to prepare for externally accredited qualifications. All the required areas of learning are included and clearly presented in suitable schemes of work and lessons plans. Individual education plans are prepared for students which ensure that they have access to subjects which develop their basic skills, prepare them well for examinations, and extend their learning through vocational courses. There is an excellent emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy right across the school. Nurture groups provide intensive one-to-one support for the youngest students as they make up previously lost ground in their reading, writing and number work. The school has started to develop excellent practical vocational courses which currently include construction trades and food studies. Students work hard to succeed in these areas of learning and some have demonstrated considerable success and achieved a number of worthwhile certificates, including City and Guilds Level 1 in Construction.

The provision for students with autistic spectrum conditions is a rapidly developing and successful

aspect of the school's work. Plans are in the process of implementation to provide more specialised accommodation and facilities to meet the needs of a broad range of students across the whole field of autistic spectrum conditions. The experienced leader of this facility ensures that care and attention are given to the individual characteristics and needs of students. There is clear evidence of excellent development over time of students' learning and communication skills.

The school provides outstanding support for students with their transition into further education and employment. Students have excellent opportunities to take part in work experience in the local community and, where appropriate, to experience taster courses in local colleges. A wide range of visits is provided to locations which illuminate and extend students' classroom learning. Students speak confidently about what they have learned, for example from visits to the Houses of Parliament, the National Portrait Gallery and a stage production of 'War Horse'. The programme for personal, social and health education and citizenship makes a strong contribution to the development of life skills and community awareness for students of all ages. As a result of the carefully planned experiences and the quality of guidance provided, all students who left the school in the last academic year entered employment, education or training.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Outstanding

Arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of students are outstanding; students state unanimously that they are safe in school. The proprietor and school leaders have ensured that all the regulatory requirements are met. The staff provide exceptional levels of supervision throughout the school day. Excellent policies and procedures to ensure students' welfare have been developed within the framework of the proprietor's good practice guidelines. Policies, for example for managing behaviour, the prevention of bullying, first aid and safeguarding of students, are comprehensive and implemented consistently. All policies are kept under rigorous review and updated regularly.

The school ensures that safe recruitment procedures are implemented robustly; all the required checks on the suitability of staff and proprietors have been completed and entered into a single central register. All staff have been trained at the required levels in child protection and careful records are maintained of training dates and the requirements for regular updating. Parents who completed a recent school questionnaire express confidence in the school's arrangements. The school, under the skilled direction of the proprietor, has implemented a unique, exemplary approach to managing new referrals and any causes for concern. This internal 'panel' meeting provides immediate access to the integrated range of expertise available within the school and ensures a rapid response to meet individual students' needs.

High quality risk assessments are completed for all school activities, for individual students and for premises safety. Arrangements to ensure fire safety are exemplary; a fire risk assessment is updated regularly and used as the basis for continuous monitoring of all aspects of fire safety.

Leadership and management

Outstanding

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding and underpins the school's continuous drive for excellence. The proprietor communicates a vibrant vision of how students' lives may be changed; this is shared by senior leaders across the school and communicated throughout the staff team. The staff, in their responses to the inspection questionnaire, state unanimously that they are proud to work at the school. Senior leaders have developed excellent arrangements for the review of teaching, learning and students' progress. They work very effectively, together with the school's improvement partner, to monitor all aspects of the performance of staff and the school's impact on students' learning and personal development. They provide exemplary opportunities for the development and further training of staff supporting students with behavioural, emotional and

social difficulties, and autistic spectrum conditions.

The proprietor and staff ensure excellent attention to detail in policy and its implementation. Arrangements for the safeguarding of students are outstanding, and the leadership has achieved excellence in teaching, the curriculum and students' achievement. The school knows its strengths and plans extremely well for improvement; it has made improvement across all aspects of the school's work since the last inspection. The premises and accommodation are constantly under review and firm plans are at an advanced stage to provide additional new premises. All the required information is provided for parents, including a suitable complaints procedure. The school's leaders, managers and staff provide high quality role models for the students and demonstrate excellent dedication and commitment. The proprietor and school leaders have demonstrated consistent capacity for continued development.

It is recommended that phase 1 of the material change request be approved, subject to the submission to the Department for Education of the requested documentation.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	136052
Inspection number	422826
DfE registration number	316/6072

This inspection was carried out 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.

Type of school	Day special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, and autistic spectrum conditions
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	7–17 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	63
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Thomas Keaney
Headteacher	Adrian Thomas
Executive headteacher	Mark Jordan
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 November 2010
Annual fees (day pupils)	£49,500 to £63,000
Telephone number	020 8221 1247
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