

# Essex Fresh Start

1 Wellesley Road, Clacton, CO15 3PP

**Inspection dates** 23–25 September 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good school

- Students make good and sometimes outstanding progress as a result of good teaching. Most students enter the school with standards of achievement considerably below those expected for their age.
- The curriculum for primary and secondary students is stimulating; diverse experiences over time successfully promote core skills and vocational learning that are tailored to individual students.
- The joint leadership between headteacher and proprietor ensures that their vision of personal success for all students is shared across the different sites. They have secured highly effective teamwork. As a result of rigorous monitoring, the quality of teaching and student achievement are at least good.
- Staff have high expectations for student behaviour. They consistently challenge and support students to improve their behaviour and self-confidence. Attendance has also improved as a result.
- The school council offers an excellent forum for students to learn to speak and listen to others in a democratic way.
- Within a short time students feel safe, and are kept safe. Student welfare and safety are paramount. Students benefit enormously from the individual support they receive from staff.
- The school provides an outstanding quality of care and learning experiences for students with autistic spectrum conditions. In mathematics and science some students reach age related expectations. This represents rapid progress from their low starting points.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding.
- Some students who find learning difficult, including in writing activities, are not always given effective support.
- The current sixth form curriculum is limited.
- Students do not assess and record the extent of their progress towards their targets well enough in progress review sessions.
- Some more able students are not sufficiently challenged to achieve even more.

### 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

- This inspection was conducted with one day’s notice.
- The inspection team jointly observed ten lessons across the three sites, conducted learning tours, and also visited a vocational provision that works in partnership with the school.
- The inspection team had meetings with the headteacher and proprietor, as well as staff at all three sites. Surveys of pupils and parents or carers were taken account of, along with 29 staff questionnaires. The views of local authorities and local policing were obtained.
- Individual conversations took place with the majority of students.
- A wide range of written evidence was considered, including school policies, data about students’ progress, planning documents, the school’s self-evaluation, and samples of students’ work.

## Inspection team

Sa'ad Khaldi, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Susan Cox	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Essex Fresh Start School is located on three sites in Clacton, Chelmsford and Harlow respectively. All three sites have inclusion managers.
- 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. It has some specialist teachers that can offer therapeutic elements within its curriculum.
- The school is registered to take up to 96 students in the age range seven to 17 years.
- There are currently 57 students on the roll of the school, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. Ten students have autistic spectrum conditions, and seven students are in the care of local authorities.
- There are two sixth form students.
- The school makes use of additional provision at Chelmsford College for some vocational courses. Additional off-site locations are regularly used for physical education, sports, horticulture, motor vehicle maintenance and equine care courses.
- The school's vision is that 'Every child has a chance to achieve'.
- The school is part of a group of schools owned by Transitional Care Education Services (TCES) Ltd. The TCES group is a social enterprise business and provides central support to its schools.
- The school was last inspected in March 2011.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the proportion of outstanding teaching to secure rapid rates of progress by:
  - getting students to self-assess and routinely record their progress, so that they can begin to reflect on their learning during key worker sessions
  - providing more able students with the opportunity to study for higher level qualifications in Key Stage 4
  - providing those students who find learning hard with better support and guidance, by providing clear examples of the skills they are expected to learn, and securing their full engagement in lessons
  - addressing more effectively the needs of those students who find writing hard by providing better support through the use of word processing and information technologies.
- Improve the curriculum for post-16 students by:
  - increasing the range of accredited courses, to include vocational studies, as well as developing students' life skills further.

## Inspection judgements

### Achievement of pupils

### Good

- The achievement of students is good. The majority of students are placed with the school for a maximum of three-years. During this time, the majority of students make good or better progress in English, mathematics and science and a small minority make expected progress.
- Students on entry to the school are carefully assessed in literacy and mathematics. These assessments look at both attitudes to learning and past achievement. This means that students are provided with tailored programmes which build on what they already can do.
- Teaching focuses well on developing students' literacy and numeracy skills, including their speaking and listening skills. For example, teachers encourage students to join in conversations, and to take turns in speaking and listening. Those who are ready are asked to make a presentation to the school council on a topic of their choice to demonstrate their progress and confidence.
- On entry to the school, almost all students are working at standards below or considerably below those expected for their age. This is mostly as a result of previous disruptions to their education. Staff are skilled at assessing students' starting points as well as special educational needs and disabilities. This information is well used to set appropriate work at the right level of challenge. Student progress is reviewed with key workers regularly.
- Almost all students achieve success with level 1 functional skills qualification in English and mathematics during their time in Key Stage 4.
- Nevertheless, although the most able students succeed in achieving a range of GCSE foundation subjects and are encouraged to apply for college courses, many have the potential to achieve more foundation level GCSEs including science, or a level 2 qualification.
- A small proportion of students arrive with very low literacy skills. On entry to the school, their progress in lessons is often slow. Some of these students find writing particularly difficult. Although these students acquire these skills to a functional level, there are missed opportunities for them to improve their communication and motivation through the use of ICT (information and communication and technology).
- The school curriculum enables students to broaden their experiences and to learn more deeply, as they are able to achieve hygiene certificates in food technology, primary first aid, and St John's first aid certificates in health education. This also provides good support for their life and care skills. Furthermore, vocational placements linked to Chelmsford College or other approved providers similarly allow students to work to level 1 qualifications in caring for children, equine care, horticulture, motor vehicle maintenance or retail.
- The achievement of pupils with autistic spectrum conditions is outstanding. They respond very well to the structured support offered and develop very good working relationships in small groups with their teachers. Although some of these students are socially vulnerable, they often have high academic ability.
- A key element in students' achievement is through the effective interaction with therapy sessions in art, drama and music. Many students arrive lacking an emotional vocabulary, and do not enjoy learning. Through these therapies, they develop self confidence, become more expressive and better motivated to learn.
- A daily element of the school day is a group session where students respond to questions on their progress from all the teaching staff. While useful, it lacks focus because students are not routinely asked to assess their own progress towards their targets on a day-to-day basis.
- The number of sixth form students is very small and they follow individualised programmes that mostly overlap with Year 11. Sixth form achievement is good, as it is about extending and securing skills. The present curriculum is limited and does not provide enough opportunities for students to develop further key life skills and or to study vocational courses.

**Quality of teaching****Good**

- The quality of teaching is good and enables students to make good progress, particularly in English and mathematics. Teaching is consistently good across the three school sites. This is the result of shared training and professional development. Some new staff are receiving good induction support especially in relation to classroom management and how to keep students safe through safeguarding training.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. Lessons start promptly and usually engage student's interest well through relevant and interesting topics. Teachers are adept at asking questions to focus student attention and to enable them to recall and describe key ideas.
- Teachers' planning pays appropriate attention to ensure that student's different needs and abilities are met effectively. However, in a small number of lessons not enough focus is given to support student's learning because they do not always understand what they are expected to learn, nor are they given enough guidance.
- Some students are learning to present ideas to others. These skills are valued as they transfer well to the interview techniques they need for college and vocational applications. Staff give time to listening to these ideas in the school council meetings and they provide students with clear guidance on how to improve.
- There is a consistency of entitlement at all three sites in subjects and activities. Teachers use a variety of learning styles. Each half-term involves at least one significant visit or learning experience that involves a depth of challenge. This is carefully recorded in a year book with evidence, photographs and personal achievements.
- Work scrutinies show that over time much teaching succeeds in transforming students' attitudes into a 'can do' approach. This provides the basis for preparing students well for their next stage of education or employment. Nine out of ten students go on to further education or employment, as a result of good teaching and an effective curriculum.
- The rigorous use of assessment ensures that staff are able to measure the extent and rate of student progress, particularly in English and mathematics. The school is developing new approaches in assessment in response to changes in the National Curriculum.
- Provision for careers guidance, including opportunities for work experience or college placement is good. Some specialist staff are shared between Chelmsford and Harlow sites.

**Behaviour and safety of pupils****Outstanding**

- Student's behaviour is outstanding. The school can demonstrate significant improvements in their behaviour and attitudes to learning. Many students arrive with exceptionally challenging behaviour. Staff are highly competent in pre-empting any potential flash points. They skilfully develop student's self control, so that they are able to interact well with their friends, and learn effectively. Students consistently show pride in their work and enjoy contributing to school life.
- All students have statements of special educational needs and disabilities. The majority of students have statements for behaviour, emotional and social difficulties. They arrive at the school with extremely poor records of attendance and significant gaps in their learning. Many initially find it difficult to trust relationships and have rarely experienced positive learning success.
- A very well defined and agreed behaviour policy exists and this is applied consistently by all staff. Recording of behaviour patterns is very detailed and students are encouraged to reflect on these patterns. The use of key workers, inclusion managers and senior staff means that there is a review team around each student.
- All students have a detailed personalised behaviour plan. These are known by parents or carers and the key worker. They are changed in response to regular reviews, and new targets defined.
- Fixed term exclusions are part of the sanctions used by the school. They are limited in

number and are usually linked to a student being sent home while a parent or carer's involvement is sought. Most happen in the first term of admission. Almost all students' co-operate with staff instructions and will apologise if they have not. They accept and respond to five and ten minute detentions as sanctions for minor misbehaviour.

- The improvement of most students' attendance, and their pride and acceptance of school uniform in Key Stage 4, act as an indicator of their personal progress. Key workers regularly contact parents and carers to share week by week progress. The school also does surveys of parents and carers views to check that its partnership and communication with them is highly successful.
- The school has a strong working relationship with community policing on each site. Community officers regularly visit and give talks to students. The personal and social development programme provides students with good opportunities to understand the values of British society, the rule of law and respect for others.
- The school's arrangements to ensure the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students are outstanding. Every school site has a year book that records student's achievements, their full participation and the many visits. Over time the school can demonstrate that students contribute to the culture of the school and they are given many opportunities to do so. It is this systematic confidence building that is outstanding.
- The school celebrates annually its leavers with an achievement ceremony. It is mark of its success that Anglia Ruskin University allows it to use its premises for this purpose. A parent wrote in the school graduation book, 'I never believed that my child could be such a success!'
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students say that they feel safe and that staff are always there to listen to their concerns. Outside speakers visit regularly to give advice and counselling on lifestyle choices linked to relationships, drugs, alcohol misuse and cyber bullying. Community and fund-raising activities restore many students' social confidence and confirm their capacity to help others.
- Senior managers use communication technology between the sites so that they can confer with educational professionals, and each other. These conferences have fully written records and they mean that no site works in isolation. Changes in student behaviour and safety are responded to quickly, and bullying is rare.
- All the required checks on staff suitability, training in child protection, first aid and fire safety are all managed to a high standard, together with all aspects of fire safety. The school's leaders and proprietor have ensured that all regulatory standards are met.

## Leadership and management

## Outstanding

- The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. All leaders across all three sites share high expectations and a commitment to inclusion for all students. As a result the quality of teaching and student achievement is at least good and often outstanding.
- Leaders are able to demonstrate how they have improved student behaviour and attitudes to learning dramatically. Students become confident, self motivated and co-operative learners.
- All three sites have experienced inclusion managers. They quality assure the day to day provision for all students so that it is consistent with the school's aim that all students are capable of improving their engagement, motivation and success. They are also able to help them with any difficulties both in and outside school.
- Leaders monitor all aspects of the school, including the quality of teaching, and the progress students make. Teacher assessments are used to track student progress. This information is shared with the TCES core team who review resources, staff training and how well the school is improving. The proprietor has an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Self-evaluation is accurate. The school development plan is appropriately detailed and regularly updated. The school has an effective outside improvement partner who assists in offering an independent view of school performance.

- Senior leaders are adept at identifying strengths and areas for development in both teaching and learning. As a consequence both teaching staff and teaching assistants feel well supported through an appraisal cycle. Staff have appropriate targets for improvement, they receive effective feedback and relevant training. The school development plan regularly reviews the professional development of staff across all three sites.
- The school has moved some of its sites but leaders continuously focus on improvement. They are adept at using communication technologies to conference securely around each student and secure the recommendations of educational and health professionals.
- All aspects of students' welfare and safety are given high priority and regular training ensures that staff are kept up-to-date with statutory requirements.
- The headteacher has a strong working relationship with her staff and the proprietor. Staff questionnaires show very high levels of confidence in the leadership and management.
- Parents are positive about the school and confirm this in termly surveys. The local authorities placing students have confidence, such that one authority has a block agreement for places. Pupils arriving quickly recognise that it is a safe school, and develop secure relationships sometimes against a pattern of previous experience.
- The school is responding well to changes in the National Curriculum by modifying its assessment systems and considering how subject can be planned and taught.
- The proprietor, is rigorous in supervising safeguarding and staff appointments and the safeguarding requirements are fully met
- Managers have ensured that all the independent school regulations are met, and have demonstrated the capacity for continued school improvement.



## What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate
<p>Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the <i>Non-association independent school inspection handbook</i> which is published on the Ofsted website: <a href="http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053">www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053</a>.</p>	

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135150
<b>Inspection number</b>	442991
<b>DfE registration number</b>	881/6056

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Day special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, including an educational provision for students with autistic spectrum conditions
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	57
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Thomas Keaney
<b>Chair</b>	Thomas Keaney
<b>Headteacher</b>	Cheryl Rutter
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 March 2011
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£36000 to £63000
<b>Telephone number</b>	01245 490008
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