

# Inspired Directions School

57 Dalston Lane, London, E8 3NG

<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–12 June 2015
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<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good school

- Senior leaders, working closely with the Inspire directors, have rapidly established a nurturing, caring environment where students can succeed.
- Students feel safe in the school and learn to manage their feelings and emotions so that behaviour in lessons and around the site is good.
- The attendance of the students improves markedly from when they first join the school. For most students their attendance is above that of the average figures for secondary schools.
- Throughout its first year as a school, leaders and managers have established an expectation of typically good teaching. All staff have responded very positively, ensuring that good teaching regularly enables students to learn well.
- Although attainment is lower than that expected of their age group, students make rapid progress over their time at the school. As a result, they achieve well, making especially good gains in English and mathematics.
- The areas taught are organised to match the individual needs of the students. The school is especially successful in increasing their employability skills, both personal and academic.
- Students are well prepared for the next stage of their education and training because of good careers advice. Importantly, students make up lost ground in their basic skills. Parents and carers are delighted in the excellent turnaround in their children's attitudes to school since starting at Inspire.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students are not encouraged to respond regularly to teachers' careful marking of their work in order to learn from their mistakes.
- Opportunities are missed in some lessons to help students communicate their thinking orally, and so enhance their language skills.
- The range of externally accredited courses is limited and this restricts students' future choices.
- The links with science and technology in the enterprise projects are not explicit enough, so that there are missed opportunities to check students' learning and progress in these areas.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the schedule for the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Information about this inspection

- There has been no previous inspection of this school.
- This inspection took place with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed five lessons or parts of lessons and held informal discussions with students and staff.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. The inspector considered six responses to the staff questionnaire, spoke to two parents and carers, two students, and considered some of the students' evaluations of their work at the school. The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and a representative from the proprietorial body.
- The inspector reviewed key documents and policies in order to check compliance with the independent schools standards, particularly with regard to safeguarding. She also checked the school website and scrutinised students' files, case studies and the centre's information about students' attainment and progress. The inspector also listened to a student reading.

## Inspection team

Sheila Nolan, Lead Inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Inspired Directions School, Hackney, was established by the charity Inspire!, an education-business partnership. It was registered as a school in June 2014 for six students between 13 and 16 years of age. It offers alternative provision for learners with high needs who struggle to access mainstream education. Students join the school throughout the school year. This is the school's first inspection.
- The aim of the school is to promote an ethos based on the values of 'individuality, collectivism, and progression'. It strives to provide an individual timetable for each student, based on 'personality, interests and needs'. It caters for students at risk of exclusion, for those who have been excluded from school, and for those not in other forms of education, employment or training.
- Currently, there are six students on the roll, two of whom have statements of special educational needs. Four students are in Year 10 and two are completing Year 11. Generally, after joining the school, students remain at the provision until the end of Year 11. All students have very complex needs. Some have moderate learning difficulties, speech language and communication difficulties, visual and hearing impairment, and other significant medical problems. All have interrupted education in mainstream schools.
- All students are from the London Boroughs of Hackney and Islington. The ethnic heritages of the students reflect the make up of the local area. Three of the present students are girls and there are three boys. All students are eligible for free school meals. The school is not in receipt of additional government funding for disadvantaged students.
- Any off-site activities are undertaken with school staff, other than when students are on work experience.
- There are no middle leaders.
- Students take entry qualifications when they are ready, particularly early entry level 1 in English and mathematics.

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

- Improve teaching even further by ensuring that:
  - there are more opportunities in lessons to encourage students to communicate their thinking orally and so enhance their language skills
  - students routinely revisit marked work to improve their written tasks by following teachers' helpful guidance, and by correcting errors.
- Expand the range of subjects offered to include:
  - more externally accredited work-related courses
  - explicit links to science and technology within the enterprise projects and ways of checking students' progress in these areas over the length of the project.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- Since its opening a year ago, the determined leadership of the school has built successfully on the well-established local links of the education-business partnership. The school offers a secure, calm environment where students feel safe, are nurtured, and begin to address well the gaps in their learning from previously disrupted education. The school receives good support from its charity, Inspire, particularly with regard to financial management.
- Those few students who have so far left the school have all gained significantly in employability skills, as well as in their personal development. They are well prepared for their next stage of training, education or employment, demonstrating that, because it is well managed, the school meets its aims for the young people in its care.
- Leaders and managers have high expectations of the staff. They have ensured that over the year teaching is at least good. A culture of mutual respect between staff and students allows students to flourish, grow in confidence and, above all, improve their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Parents' views echo these findings. One commented, 'My daughter is 100% a different person. From not being able to read and write, she can now help her younger brothers and sisters with their homework.' The school's engagement with the students' families is excellent, involving them where possible in the education of the young people in their charge.
- Staff value every student equally, providing for their needs as well as possible. Students respond with increasing loyalty, displayed in their regular attendance and markedly improved behaviour. Students feel safe and have the confidence to ask for help when needed. The school ensures that there is no discrimination of any kind, whether it is in the classroom or on work experience. Students on work experience are carefully supervised for safety, behaviour and attendance.
- The range of subjects is well matched to students' academic starting points and personal needs. Major strengths lie in the extent of students' improvements in literacy and numeracy, in the preparation of the students for employment, and for life in modern Britain. The school guards against any form of extremism and effectively promotes students' sense of right and wrong. There are helpful procedures for 'retribution and reparation' when things go wrong. Students' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is good.
- Programmes of work are well planned to meet the needs of the students. They range from entry-level qualifications to GCSE examination courses. Nevertheless, the school recognises that there are missed opportunities to maximise the impact of the stimulating cross-curricular and enterprise projects, particularly the links to science and technology.
- For the current students, information on progress is recorded meticulously in their files. This works well as numbers are small. Starting points are clear, as is progress in reading, for example. The accuracy of staff evaluations of learning from lessons is moderated regularly through discussion with senior staff. However, the school is missing opportunities to encourage students to revisit carefully marked work and respond to teachers' guidance, and this restricts some aspects of their progress.
- Careers education and guidance are very effective, so that students all have a planned goal for which to aim. Each student leaving the school goes on to further training, education or employment with training. Carefully managed work experience helps students to mature and make the most of the opportunities the school provides. Nevertheless, the range of external accreditation currently available is restricted and there is scope to extend the work-related courses on offer to widen students' range of future career choices.
- Members of staff support students in managing their behaviour very well. Parents, carers and students report that behaviour, attitudes to school and attendance are much improved since joining the school. The well-considered pattern of the school day helps the students to flourish, both in their learning and in their personal development.
- The quality of teaching is monitored regularly and staff supported in their practice where necessary. Nevertheless, the school recognises that in this first year, there have been few opportunities, including through links with other schools, to further the training and development of the staff so that teaching moves from good to outstanding. This is why leadership and management are good rather than outstanding.
- The school ensures that all statutory regulations regarding the safeguarding of the students are met. Members of staff go the extra mile to make sure the students feel secure and have someone to support them. Risk assessments are thorough and students are supervised carefully on off-site activities such as the 'pizza in the park' project. Training in child protection is up to date for all staff and at the level

required for staff members' responsibilities.

- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met for this aspect of the centre's work, including those relating to safeguarding and child protection.

#### ■ The governance of the school:

The board of directors for the school, including representatives of the charity Inspire, and a former student have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.

Through regular reports and visits, leaders are clear as to how well young people are taught and developing in their learning and in personal development. They are also clear as to how students' outcomes are linked with staff performance and progression in pay scales. Directors are well placed to tackle any underperformance with regard to the quality of teaching should it arise. Staff are recruited in line with safeguarding requirements. Directors regularly match the success of the school against other alternative provision locally.

The directors have a good grasp of the school's finances. They have obtained sponsorship to assist in providing a worthwhile curriculum for the small number of students. They are active in ensuring a secure financial future for the school.

The current premises meet the requirements, but the directors have plans in hand to further develop facilities and provide for more students.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. It is improving markedly when compared to their records in their previous institutions. This is because members of staff support students' needs very well. The longer students spend in the school, the better they are at managing their behaviour. Occasionally, however, some can find it difficult to manage themselves without staff intervention. This is why behaviour is good rather than outstanding.
- Students' attitudes to learning in lessons are good. Students respond well to the learning activities whether the sessions are individual, group or whole class. As their literacy skills improve and students gain in self-esteem and confidence, they participate well. They tackle work that challenges them and from which they would previously have shied away. Students are at ease, for example, in reading aloud, and show appreciation for well-presented text.
- The students' attendance also improves greatly when compared with that previously. Almost all of the students have improved their attendance, so that it is at least in line with what is expected in mainstream secondary schools. Punctuality to school is good because the school day is organised to help students get to lessons on time. They benefit from the pre-class breakfast opportunity.
- Students understand the school's system of sanctions and rewards and know the difference between right and wrong. Students are confident that the staff are always there to help them and trust in the systems to help them make reparation when something goes wrong. Students learn to accept difference in others and to treat everyone with respect.
- In their enterprise activities, students learn to engage well with the general public, modelling their behaviour on that of the responsible adults with them. They behave well when on work experience.
- Leaders have ensured that the required policies and procedures are in place, so that the independent school standards for this aspect are met.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Supervision is robust, but not oppressive. Risk assessments are documented and attended to well. The school is determined to 'resolve the barriers between outside and the school' as far as behaviour is concerned. Students are helped to keep themselves safe in the challenging urban environments in which they live. They know that help is at hand from the school if they need it. One student commented that she wants to come to school 'even when not well'.
- Students are aware of the issues relating to all aspects of bullying and drug abuse, sometimes from personal experience. They are particularly aware of the risks from the use of social media and cyber bullying. The school strives successfully to help students respect themselves as well as others.
- Training for staff is up to date with regard to safety, restraint, child protection and first aid. Records show very few incidents. Premises and fire regulations are checked, as well as online safety. Students' access to mobile phones is restricted within the school day.
- The centre meets all of the independent standards relating to students' welfare, health and safety.

**The quality of teaching is good**

- Teaching is typically good and empowers students to make up lost ground in their learning, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Common strengths in all of the lessons visited include very careful planning to build on previous learning, activities and useful ways to help students gain independence in their work.
- The development of students' reading is especially well managed. This work feeds into other lessons where staff ensure that work is set at the right reading level to allow for the students' successful access. Above all, working relationships between staff and students are warm. All members of staff model patience and respect when dealing with others, even in difficult circumstances.
- Resources are well used to help students understand concepts. In a mathematics lessons on 'parts of a whole', for example, a student made good gains in grasping the idea of fractions as equal parts because of the useful visual and practical equipment.
- Staff regularly encourage students to communicate orally, but sometimes students do not have the language to do so effectively. Sometimes teaching does not provide enough opportunities for students to try to express their understanding and thinking aloud, and to develop subject-specific vocabulary. This is why teaching is good rather than outstanding.
- Personal development sessions are used well to introduce students to other cultures. In a lesson on mindfulness, students had the opportunity, for example, to reflect on colonial history in India and on the mission of Gandhi in particular, and this made a significant contribution to their understanding of social and moral issues.
- Much work in science and technology is covered through themed and enterprise activities. Although students benefit greatly from these sessions, the actual learning in both areas is not always audited, checked, and recorded explicitly. This was the case in the 'pizza in the park' enterprise, for example. Students learned how yeast works, about weighing, measuring, budgeting and record keeping, and about how vegetable waste breaks down to form fertiliser. Not all such learning is followed up back in class.
- The small nature of the school means that it is not always possible to offer the full range of scientific and technological experience on site. The school recognises that a way forward is to form stronger links with a local maintained school, particularly for practical work.
- Marking of students' work is regular and helpful. However, students are not encouraged enough to revisit their work and improve the written tasks following teachers' good guidance.
- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards for teaching and assessment are met.

**The achievement of pupils is good**

- Previously disrupted education has resulted in students having significant gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding of key concepts. Some students have not attended mainstream education for up to two years. As a result, starting points are mainly low, with reading ages commonly up to nine years below students' chronological age.
- Students make good progress, particularly in acquiring literacy skills. Their capacity to read improves especially rapidly, although their overall attainment remains below average. They also make good progress in writing and in basic mathematics. Students are especially proud of their published booklet of poetry, *Inspiring Words*.
- All students acquire worthwhile accreditation by the time they are ready to leave the school. These qualifications range from entry levels in English and mathematics to GCSE examinations. Additionally, through the well-structured work experience programmes, students gain a range of employability skills. Other curricular areas are not accredited externally. The school is seeking to expand the range of accreditation offered, especially work-related qualifications. Nevertheless, the package offered by the school prepares the students well for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- The most able students have opportunities to take GCSE qualifications. So far, only a few students have been ready to do so. The flexible nature of the curriculum and the well-qualified staff mean that most examination specifications can be tailored to students' needs.
- Students' progress on enterprise activities is measured against their success in 'the business' and by the school staff evaluating their contributions throughout the day. Students also evaluate their own performance and reflect on their progress with the staff. They learn how to maximise and manage their profits and spend the funds wisely, including contributions to a charity.
- Progress in personal development is central to the school's work with the students. This is demonstrated well by their regular attendance, their engagement in lessons, and by their good working relationships

with staff. The wide range of visits, art and film activities and gym opportunities enables students to develop their interpersonal skills well.

- In relation to students' academic and personal development, the school meets the independent school standards well.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook).



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	141029
<b>Inspection number</b>	462895
<b>DfE registration number</b>	204/6009
<b>Type of school</b>	Day special school
<b>School status</b>	Independent special school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	13–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	6
<b>Proprietor</b>	Inspire
<b>Chair</b>	Emma West
<b>Headteacher</b>	Robin Childs
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	n/a
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£12,900–£19,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7275 6060
<b>Fax number</b>	020 7275 6061
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