

Estuary High School

Chalkwell Lawns, 648–656 London Road, Westcliff-on-Sea Essex SS0 9HR

Inspection dates

1–3 May 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Sixth form provision	Insufficient evidence
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- School leaders have a thorough understanding of the needs of pupils in the school. As a result, pupils adapt quickly to the school and make rapid progress in their social and emotional development.
- Pupils are well supported by the adults who work with them because they understand their learning and behaviour needs.
- The calm, well-ordered learning environment helps pupils to focus on their learning, attend school regularly and take responsibility for their own behaviour.
- Pupils' behaviour is good because they understand what the teacher and teaching assistants expect of them.
- Pupils feel safe in the school because they are supervised appropriately. Pupils are confident that staff listen carefully to them when they need to talk.
- The school provides specialist learning areas for art and music. Pupils are motivated and proud of their achievements in these subjects.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities which broaden their academic, cultural and social experiences.
- Pupils do not receive information and guidance about possible next steps early enough. As a result, some feel anxious about their next steps.
- A personal learning plan is in place for each pupil but pupils do not always make the progress they are capable of because the plans are not regularly reviewed and updated.
- Curriculum planning is well developed in English and mathematics. Planning in other subjects is less effective in providing high-quality teaching and learning.
- The headteacher has concentrated on improving teaching and learning in English and mathematics in the first instance. The leadership of other subject areas is less effective.
- There are too few pupils to make a judgement about the sixth form provision.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils make the best possible progress by:
 - developing effective curriculum plans in all subjects so that they match the quality and effectiveness of those for English and mathematics
 - basing pupils' learning plans on individual needs and reviewing these plans regularly
 - broadening pupils' understanding of how their learning relates to work contexts early enough so that they are well prepared for the next stage in life.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - providing professional support for the recently appointed headteacher so that she can work with curriculum leaders to develop all subjects to the same high quality as English and mathematics
 - reviewing and updating non-statutory policies.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- The headteacher has made significant improvements to the school since her appointment in September 2017. Staff report a renewed sense of purpose and a clear strategic direction under her leadership.
- The headteacher knows each pupil very well. She prepares regular and thorough reviews of education, health and care plans and learning plans in collaboration with placing authorities, parents, carers and the pupils themselves.
- As the number of pupils has increased, school leaders have made effective adjustments to the curriculum, classroom environments and approaches to working with pupils. This helps pupils settle quickly into their new school and make strong progress.
- The headteacher has been very effective in building teaching capacity. She has arranged for pupils to work with specialist teachers in subjects such as art, music and science.
- Together with the school's improvement partner, the headteacher has started to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. This has helped her to identify the training needs of teachers and teaching assistants. Teachers and teaching assistants are now working as a professional team. Teaching assistants feel supported by school leaders because they are encouraged to improve their professional skills.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school and is given high priority. The headteacher has linked pupils' learning to these four areas. Pupils have participated in a science, technology, engineering and mathematics workshop at Kite Children's Services head office. In addition, all pupils have gone on theatre and museum visits, organised fundraising events for a local church and they have prepared for a Duke of Edinburgh's bronze award.
- Effective teamwork between the headteacher and teaching assistants means that approaches to supporting pupils' learning and behaviour remain consistent and purposeful. In partnership with those who care for pupils, the staff team reviews the progress of each pupil at the beginning and end of every day. This means that information is passed between school and home in a timely manner.
- Leadership of the wider curriculum is not fully effective. This is recognised by the proprietor. Plans are in place to improve the leadership and management of the wider curriculum further but this work is at an early stage.
- School leaders have numerous non-statutory policies in place. A number have not been reviewed and updated to ensure that they are fully relevant to the current context of the school.
- School leaders intend to request the Department for Education for a material change in the age range of pupils. In preparation, they have considered how the curriculum could be adjusted to meet the learning needs of younger pupils. They have also planned how they could adapt the classroom space and teaching capacity in the school so that pupils could be taught in age-appropriate groups.

Governance

- The proprietors take responsibility for ensuring that the independent school standards are met. For example, the proprietors:
 - ensure that routine checks of site safety are rigorous and that required maintenance work is completed
 - appoint suitably qualified teaching staff
 - ensure that pupils have high-quality learning resources.
- The school's steering group now includes the school improvement partner and, as a result, meetings now focus on improvements to the quality of teaching and learning and how these are supporting pupils' progress.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has robust systems to check the suitability of staff to work with vulnerable pupils.
- The school's safeguarding policies and guidance for staff are up to date, relevant to the school and understood by those who work with pupils.
- The designated safeguarding lead is well informed. She works closely with the Kite Children's Service safeguarding officer and the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
- Safeguarding training for staff is wide-ranging and ongoing. This means that staff are well equipped to keep pupils safe. They know how to report concerns if they arise.
- Pupils feel safe because the school site is secure and supervised well by adults. Pupils trust teaching staff and feel confident that they can share concerns with the adults who support them.
- The school has robust procedures to ensure that pupils remain safe online. Pupils understand and respect school rules about internet and mobile phone use. As a result, they are proud if they earn the right to carefully controlled internet access.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils receive regular support and advice to improve their work. As a result, for example, in English pupils are becoming more confident in most aspects of writing, including sentence structure and punctuation.
- In other subjects, adults' advice to pupils takes the form of a conversation between teaching assistants and pupils. Pupils value the individual nature of these comments and are positive in their relationships with their teacher and teaching assistants because they know them very well.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning because their teachers know what will interest them. This helps them to learn. For example, in English pupils were intrigued by a different perception of the world when they read 'The curious incident of the dog in the night time'.

- Pupils are proud of gaining recognition for producing high-quality work and making effort during lessons. They strive to live up to teachers' high expectations and are motivated by positive comments and reward points.
- Learning time is used effectively in lessons. Pupils are enabled to focus and concentrate. The well-organised classroom environment supports them in this.
- The headteacher and teaching assistants have worked hard to ensure that pupils' learning is well resourced. For example, the school has introduced practical music activities and has set up a small-scale teaching and rehearsal area equipped with keyboards, guitars and a drum kit. Pupils know how to handle musical instruments and look after this equipment with care. Pupils are proud to perform at special events.
- The school has made adjustments to curriculum plans and approaches to teaching as more pupils have joined the school. Given gaps in the learning of many pupils who are new to the school, this has helped teachers in English and mathematics to identify what additional help or practice pupils need. For example, in mathematics, one pupil explained that he had missed learning how to do a specific type of calculation at his previous school. Following one-to-one support from his teacher, he has successfully practised and reapplied his learning.
- The teachers of English and mathematics understand pupils' needs very well, pitching expectations at the right level and planning activities which match pupils' interests and builds on prior knowledge. In these subjects a pupil said that he makes progress 'when the teaching assistant challenges me to work hard because she expects me to explain my thinking or work things out for myself'.
- In other subjects, learning is at times less secure when pupils do not understand the purpose of their learning or how to make improvements in their work. The headteacher recognises that more training is required for her and her staff to ensure that the teaching of these subjects is as consistently strong as it is in English and mathematics.
- Following the previous inspection, the school adopted a more rigorous approach to assessing pupils when they join the school and then on a termly basis. In English and mathematics, teachers now identify gaps in pupils' learning and use this information to plan learning activities. Additional support in developing reading skills is helping pupils to make better progress in all curriculum subjects.
- The school has introduced a personalised learning plan for each pupil. These plans require further development and regular review so that all teachers and teaching assistants can use them more effectively to help pupils make sustained progress in all subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school has introduced a system to capture each pupil's attitudes to learning, progress and homework. This helps teachers, parents and carers to highlight positive achievements as well as day-to-day concerns which might affect pupils' learning.
- Pupils have regular opportunities to take part in 'mini-mainstream' learning activities at

a neighbouring school. This helps them to have access to specialist teachers and resources.

- Pupils take part in numerous trips and visits. The headteacher spoke with great commitment about the activities, such as community fundraising projects, that pupils take part in. These activities help broaden the experiences and cultural understanding of the pupils.
- Pupils are respectful of one another. They encourage each other and give praise for the achievements of others.
- School leaders have established productive links with a local supermarket and, as a result, all pupils attend a food technology session at the store once a fortnight. They clearly enjoy the practical aspects of cooking and speak to the session leaders with respect. Productive and supportive relationships have developed between the pupils and the session leaders.
- The curriculum is designed to give pupils a range of experiences, including gardening. Although outdoor play space is limited, pupils are enthusiastic about the vegetables and flowers that they grow. One key stage 3 pupil told the inspector, 'I love gardening. It keeps me in touch with nature.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school's stated intention 'to provide a safe and nurturing environment' is clearly established and evident. The school is a calm place where pupils feel valued because the adults who work with them take a real interest in them. Pupils settle quickly at the start of the school day because staff offer reassurance or other support to help them overcome any anxieties or concerns.
- Pupils understand the school's expectations of their behaviour. They value the school's system for rewarding pupils' effort and progress in learning. Most pupils strive to respond quickly and positively to teachers' requests and instructions.
- Pupils are confident learners because their teachers ensure that learning activities help pupils to improve. Support for individuals means that pupils settle quickly to their learning. One key stage 3 pupil said, 'This is the best school I have ever been to.'
- Pupils understand that they make choices about their behaviour. The school system allows pupils to make positive choices. Equally, pupils are supported by teaching assistants if they need a short period of time to reflect. Pupils increasingly regulate their own behaviour and, on the few occasions when disruption to learning happens, staff are well trained in managing situations calmly.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are vigilant in observing and reflecting on pupils' behaviour. This means that they adjust behaviour-management strategies to suit individual pupils. 'Handover meetings' at the beginning and end of each day ensure that information about pupils' behaviour and welfare is shared among staff and pupils' carers.
- The school has a comprehensive approach to managing pupils' behaviour which extends to break and lunchtimes. Teachers and teaching assistants model good behaviour and appropriate use of language for pupils when everyone gathers in the kitchen or garden areas.

- Pupils and staff have good relationships. Adults supervise the vulnerable pupils well and, as a result, pupils routinely share their successes and concerns with teachers and teaching assistants.
- Attendance is above the national average. Pupils arrive on time; they want to attend lessons and they enjoy learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress from their starting points in academic and emotional development. This is because they attend school regularly and are supported by skilled teachers and teaching assistants.
- Pupils in key stage 4 are on course to meet the school's expectation that they will sit GCSE examinations in English and mathematics. The current teaching group arrangement means that the most able pupils at key stage 3 are being stretched to work at a similar standard to older pupils.
- All pupils entered for level 1 Functional Skills English in 2017 passed. They are now working towards level 2.
- The headteacher has introduced a wide curriculum offer so that pupils have a range of options as they consider their next steps in education, employment or training.
- Pupils' progress in most subject areas is good because their attitudes to learning are positive. Pupils' contributions to class discussions are encouraged and valued.
- Pupils read regularly with their teacher as part of their English lessons. Most read confidently and fluently. Pupils requiring additional support are helped by their teacher and teaching assistants. As a result they also participate well in whole-class reading activities.
- Preparations for the next stage in education, employment or training do not start early enough. For example, a pathway plan for a Year 12 pupil was not in place at the time of the inspection. Careers advice and guidance for pupils is not systematic.
- The school has introduced an assessment system so that teachers can check pupils' progress against national expectations.
- Pupils who need additional support to improve their literacy skills attend well-planned additional learning sessions with teaching assistants. These pupils' reading ages and spelling are improving swiftly.

Sixth form provision

Insufficient evidence – amnesty granted

- The few post-16 learners are fully integrated into every aspect of school life.
- Older learners are encouraged to consistently assume responsibility for their own behaviour. They make positive choices about how to interact with others in the school.
- Post-16 learners have regular access to work experience on a local farm. This is seen as a privilege and young people are proud to gain new skills.
- Safeguarding is effective in the sixth form because it is consistently in line with safeguarding practices throughout the school.

- The leadership and management of 16 to 19 education matches practice elsewhere in the school.
- School leaders do not do enough to help the vulnerable learners make effective transition to the next stages in their education, employment or training. This work does not always start early enough.

School details

Unique reference number	134940
DfE registration number	882/6053
Inspection number	10046986

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	13 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	7
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	1
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Andre Palmer
Chair	Craig Duncan
Headteacher	Julie Archer
Annual fees (day pupils)	£26,676
Telephone number	01702 483999
Website	www.kitescs.com/our-range-of-services/education
Email address	julie@estuaryhigh.com
Date of previous inspection	17–19 June 2015

Information about this school

- Estuary High School is a special school for a maximum of 10 boys, between 13 and 18 years of age, with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Pupils attending the school are all considered to be highly vulnerable, given the special nature of their

difficulties. Pupils may also have additional special educational needs, such as speech, language and communication needs, or autism.

- There are currently seven boys on roll, five of whom have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- All pupils are children looked after who have been placed in the school by one of a number of local authorities.
- Nearly all students are White British and none speaks English as an additional language.
- The school, which opened in January 2007, is part of Kites Children's Services Limited.
- The school aims to provide: 'a learning environment which will enable students to have a full range of educational activities, both within school and wider community, within a supportive framework that offers students encouragement, therapy, self-awareness and discipline'.
- As numbers are very low, there is no separate provision for the 16 to 19 learners. All pupils, including those in the sixth form, receive a personalised learning programme tailored to their needs.
- The school uses a local farm to provide a programme for work-related learning in the sixth form. It also uses local park amenities for sports coaching and pupils attend a food-technology session at a local supermarket.
- Since the previous inspection, the proprietors have changed the composition of the school's steering group to ensure more robust challenge and support for the headteacher. The group now consists of the school's improvement partner, the head of care, Kites Children's Services safeguarding leader and the headteacher.
- In 2016 the school made a request to the Department for Education (DfE) for a material change in the number and age range of pupils in the school. They no longer want to take on more pupils and will be talking to the DfE about an updated material change request regarding age of entry of pupils.

Information about this inspection

- The school was given one day's notice of this inspection.
- The inspector observed lessons in key stages 3 and 4 and scrutinised pupils' work.
- Meetings took place with the proprietor, the headteacher and teaching assistants. Discussions also took place with all pupils at the school.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's Parent View online questionnaire for these to be reported on. However, the inspector took into account carers' comments, which are part of termly reviews of pupils' progress.
- The inspector also took into account four questionnaires completed by staff.
- A range of documents related to the school's work were scrutinised. These included evidence of pupils' progress, attendance registers, policies and records relating to pupils' behaviour.
- The inspector considered the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe.
- Documents relating to the school's curriculum such as schemes of work and choice of resources were scrutinised and evaluated.
- The inspector observed pupils as they arrived at school, during lunchtime and at the end of the school day. She also observed pupils participating in a food-technology lesson off site.
- During the inspection school leaders indicated that they intend to contact the Department for Education about a material change to allow them to accept pupils from the age of 12. This was not considered at this inspection.
- A welfare inspection of one linked children's home took place from 2 May to 3 May 2018. This is the subject of a separate inspection report.

Inspection team

Jenny Carpenter, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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