

East London Independent Special School

Welfare Road, Stratford, London E15 4HT

Inspection dates

10–12 July 2018

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| 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 |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Outstanding |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and the proprietor have ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders have a detailed understanding of pupils' learning and wider needs. They use a wide range of information to personalise the curriculum, ensuring that pupils are well prepared for their next steps.
- The personal development and welfare of pupils is a strength of the school. Staff work effectively with therapists and external agencies to support pupils. As a result, most make strong social and emotional progress from their starting points.
- Pupils arrive at the school having experienced significant challenges; some have not attended formal education for prolonged periods of time. As a result of good teaching and care, pupils settle quickly and make good progress in most subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Teachers use assessment information about pupils to plan lessons effectively and personalise learning.
- Most pupils improve their attendance once they join the school.
- Leaders provide rich opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. Consequently, pupils respect different beliefs and are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are proud of their new building and take good care to keep the environment clean.
- Pupils have a good awareness of the personal risks they are exposed to, and how to keep themselves safe.
- The proprietor provides effective support and challenge. He has set up strong central systems to monitor and quality-assure the work of the school.
- Sometimes, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving.
- Pupils do not have consistent opportunities to practise their writing and mathematical skills across different subjects.
- Leaders do not take sufficient account of progress seen in pupils' work when evaluating the impact of teaching and learning.

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?

- Further improve teaching, learning and assessment, and therefore pupil outcomes, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving
 - pupils have more opportunities to practise their writing and mathematical skills across the curriculum.
- Further improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders use evidence of progress in pupils' work to sharpen their approach to evaluating the quality of teaching and learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders are determined to provide a fresh start to pupils who have disrupted and, often, unsuccessful experiences of school previously. Their vision encompasses the provision of the best opportunities for personal development and achievement. Safeguarding and pupils' personal development are the strongest aspects of the school's work; they are at the centre of everything that the school does. In this way, leaders ensure that all the independent school standards are consistently met.
- Staff are highly motivated. They, too, are committed to enhancing pupils' development and preparing them well as young adults for when they leave school. The staff share a strong sense of team endeavour, and this benefits pupils. Staff commitment and care enable pupils to thrive. As a result, pupils re-engage with learning and grow in self-esteem because they experience success and a sense of achievement, in some cases for the first time.
- Staff feel supported and listened to, and are highly supportive of leaders. They value their opportunities for continual professional development, and all staff say that they are proud to work at the school.
- Leaders have detailed knowledge and understanding of pupils' learning, social and personal needs, based on the information gathered when pupils join the school. Leaders make effective use of this to personalise each pupil's curriculum and provide additional support for pupils when they face difficulties.
- Leaders understand the challenges that many pupils have experienced, and offer a stimulating curriculum to motivate them. Pupils study core subjects alongside practical areas including art, food technology, music, physical education and personal development. Leaders continually review the curriculum and make appropriate adaptations to ensure that it is fit for purpose. Extra-curricular opportunities off site help pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding, and improve their skills. Consequently, the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils well.
- Leaders regularly review teachers' work to ensure that it has a positive impact on pupils' learning. On the occasions where teaching has not met leaders' high expectations, they and governors act quickly to provide support and coaching. Typically, this has resulted in improvements in the quality of teaching and on pupils' progress.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively. As a result, most pupils develop a strong sense of right and wrong, and an understanding of the community and wider society in which they live. In addition, pupils are well supported in their learning and achievement. The personal skills they develop and practise at school are linked to the curriculum's focus on employability skills. This prepares pupils well for life as young adults in modern Britain.
- Leaders do not take sufficient account of the progress over time in pupils' work when they evaluate the impact of teaching and learning. This leads to occasional inaccuracies in the school's information about pupils' progress, which may appear stronger than it actually is.

Governance

- The chief executive officer of TCES Group is the sole proprietor of the school. He ensures that all the independent school standards and related requirements are met.
- The school is fully supported by the proprietor. The new building with specialist facilities for science, art, food technology and computing is used well and enjoyed by pupils and staff.
- The proprietor has created a board of governors with a breadth of expertise that is deployed well to support the school. Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and know what needs to improve. Leaders produce comprehensive and detailed reports for governors to enable them to support and challenge the school.
- The proprietor keeps a sharp eye on the effectiveness of the curriculum in preparing pupils for their next steps in education and training. He employs a central team to check all aspects of the school's work. As a result, the proprietor and board have the information they need to make important decisions to move the school forward.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's safeguarding policy takes full account of the current guidance of the Secretary of State. Leaders test staff on the key content of the policy and additional guidance issued by the Department for Education. Leaders ensure that the programme for personal, social, health and economic education has a strong focus on keeping pupils safe.
- The site is fit for purpose and kept secure at all times. The headteacher and staff work hard with external teams and agencies to safeguard pupils, including the local authority. Secure arrangements are in place to safeguard pupils when they are educated off site in other local provision.
- The processes for reporting safeguarding concerns are very effective. All incidents are reported, logged and scrutinised. The designated leads for safeguarding say that they are supported fully by the company.
- Staff are all trained in child protection and able to recognise the signs of neglect and abuse. They understand their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty. Staff have accessed training on female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation. They fully understand the processes to follow. They leave nothing to chance, and report concerns promptly and accurately.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils typically experience good-quality teaching. This secures good progress over time, which is strengthened by pupils' positive attitudes towards their learning.
- Staff model how to attempt tasks successfully, and weigh pupils' responses to identify any misconceptions. Staff are adept at helping pupils make sense of their learning, and correct their work.
- Teachers follow the school's assessment policy consistently. Pupils in all year groups are

provided with written and verbal feedback, which they find useful. Scrutiny of books shows that pupils follow up on their teacher's guidance and make good progress as a result.

- Pupils access good-quality teaching of specific skills, including from specialist teachers for Spanish and physical education, which supports them to achieve well.
- Additional adults are deployed effectively to support the many pupils who require additional support. These adults liaise well with teachers, and help pupils to access their learning effectively. Consequently, most pupils sustain their motivation to learn throughout the lesson. Pupils develop the confidence to ask for help when they are stuck, and follow advice on how to improve their learning.
- Staff are successful in enabling older pupils to move forward from acquiring knowledge to considering their personal responses to their learning. Year 11 and 12 pupils and students studying vehicle maintenance, for instance, articulated well what this learning means for the next stage of their education.
- Teachers know their pupils well and skilfully plan for different pupils' needs by providing them with appropriate tasks, which challenge them. Pupils who might otherwise struggle to access the learning are carefully guided, and the most able pupils are provided with activities to extend their learning.
- Sometimes, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what some pupils are capable of achieving. On these occasions, questioning is not used skilfully to probe further and deepen pupils' understanding.
- Teachers do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to practise their writing skills and, where appropriate, mathematical skills, in different subjects. This limits the ability of some pupils to demonstrate deeper learning experiences over time.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. It is a significant strength of the school. Pupils are, uniquely, educated together, regardless of their social, emotional and mental health difficulties or autistic spectrum conditions.
- Detailed understanding of pupils' prior experiences of education and of their personal circumstances enables staff to tailor work to promote their personal development. As a result, although they lack self-assurance as learners, pupils develop greater self-confidence as they come to trust staff and enjoy successes in their learning.
- Pupils feel very safe in school and know they can get help with any issue. This provides them with the confidence to talk to staff, contributes to their safety and promotes their emotional well-being and self-esteem.
- Pupils speak very highly of the effective support they receive, for instance from the relationship mentoring and leadership and life skills coaching. Many pupils have benefited greatly from a new start. They learn to manage their feelings and emotions and grow into mature young adults. Some told inspectors they have learned more in this school than in any other they have attended.

- Pupils understand that bullying is unacceptable and not tolerated. They said that there is no bullying in school, but know that staff would address this, if needed. Pupils are respectful of others' cultural backgrounds, beliefs and traditions, even when these are different from their own. The school council actively supports leaders in promoting diversity across the school.
- Pupils learn about the dangers of the misuse of drugs and alcohol, and understand how these types of misuse can increase their vulnerability to other risks. They know that digital technologies have the potential to increase risks, and what they should do to minimise them. This understanding contributes to pupils' safety.
- Staff help pupils to develop basic skills for living. This means that they understand the importance of eating well and engaging in physical activity to promote their health and well-being. The school assesses the impact of this through each pupil's health, fitness and well-being passport.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well during lessons and in social times. They have positive attitudes to learning. These attributes contribute well to the good progress that pupils make, and to their sense of self-worth.
- Pupils show respect to the adults who work with them and visitors to the school. They look after their school environment well.
- Staff support pupils to develop the skills they need to manage themselves well. Pupils begin to recognise when they feel stressed, and learn techniques to manage their emotions and feelings. When pupils need help, staff act sensitively and effectively to support pupils to regain control of their emotions.
- Pupils almost always improve their attendance at this school once they join. Overall, attendance has risen this year. Most pupils on roll have spent time, previously, in a pupil referral unit or have been at risk of exclusion from mainstream schools. The school's unrelenting efforts are having the right impact.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils join the school at the beginning of, or during, key stages 2, 3, 4 and 5. A few pupils currently in the school are post-16. Leaders obtain detailed information about pupils' starting points from the placing authorities and from parents. They use this to track pupils' academic progress and their personal development. Most pupils make good progress across a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Pupils' work shows that they take pride in their learning and are proud of their achievements. As they complete units of work, pupils grow in confidence that their efforts have been recognised. Older pupils gain useful accreditations in some practical subjects, for example, creative arts and media, sports and active leisure, and vehicle maintenance. Leaders closely monitor pupils' progress and attendance in the off-site provision.
- Pupils' reading skills are developed effectively through, for instance, the daily 'drop

everything and read' (DEAR) programme. Pupils are nurtured in small groups, and teachers take appropriate account of their different starting points in reading when they join the school. As a result, pupils' standards in reading are rising.

- Effective teaching in English and mathematics ensures that pupils develop important skills. This enables them to achieve successfully across a range of external qualifications from entry level 1 to level 2 and, in some cases, GCSE.
- Pupils' achievements in vocational courses relating to employability skills and personal development are good. Once settled, pupils build a portfolio of good-quality work to evidence their success in achieving a range of course units and, eventually, full course accreditation.
- Pupils use their achievements and the independent careers advice they receive to plan for and secure places in further education colleges when they leave. Pupils are well prepared to take up these places with confidence.
- Many pupils lack basic social skills when they join the school. During the time they are at the school, staff successfully teach pupils to become better citizens and make a contribution to wider society. The 'group process' sessions, which all pupils engage in during the week, make a strong contribution to pupils' outstanding personal development.
- Pupils do not get sufficient opportunities to practise their writing and mathematical skills across the curriculum. This limits further academic progress of which many pupils are capable.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 136052 |
| DfE registration number | 316/6072 |
| Inspection number | 10035807 |

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.

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| Type of school | Other independent special school |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 7 to 19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 46 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | Mr Thomas Keaney |
| Headteacher | Sandra Harrison |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £57,500 to £88,000 |
| Telephone number | 020 8555 6737 |
| Website | www.tces.org.uk |
| Email address | admin.elis@tces.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 25–27 March 2014 |

Information about this school

- East London Independent Special School is a coeducational special day school. It is registered for up to 119 boys and girls aged seven to 19 years, who experience social, emotional and mental health difficulties. In addition, there is specialist provision for pupils who have autistic spectrum disorders. There are many more boys than girls.
- Pupils have a very wide range of ability, and many have additional learning needs, including complex behaviour. Many pupils have experienced difficulties of educational failure or emotional trauma at one or more previous schools.
- All pupils have statements of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Currently, 11 local authorities fund the pupils' placements.
- The number of pupils currently on roll at the school is 46, between the ages of eight and

19 years.

- The school is one of three independent special schools managed by the TCES Group (Transitional Care Education Services), a social enterprise company. The chief executive officer of TCES Group is the proprietor of the school.
- Most pupils are educated off site for enrichment and vocational lessons in local provisions. The local providers used by the school are: Beckton Skills Centre, Alderbrook Riding School, Epping Forest College, Dockland Riders, Peacocks Gym, and Food Academy.
- The school's vision is 'to provide a rich therapeutic education in an inclusive, thriving, emotionally healthy school, whereby each pupil can succeed and make a positive contribution to their community'.
- The current headteacher has been in post since February 2018.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in most classes. All lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher or other senior leaders. Learning was also observed with a senior leader at the Beckton Skills Centre, a local provider.
- Inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and talked to pupils to gain their views of the school. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at social times, as well as in lessons.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including assessments and records of pupils' progress, the school's checks and records related to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, records of governors' activities, records of how teaching is managed and the school's own self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other staff. They also met with the chief executive officer of TCES Group, who is also the proprietor of the school. Inspectors spoke to the school improvement partner and held a telephone conversation with an external education consultant who provides support and challenge to the school.
- There were very few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. Inspectors gave due consideration to the 25 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Nasim Butt, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Rosemarie McCarthy

Ofsted Inspector

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