

Inspection of Educate U

Unit 2, 58c Chapel Road, Worthing, West Sussex, West Sussex BN12 6JT

Inspection dates: 30 November–2 December 2021

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Educate U know they have landed on their feet. Many have missed significant parts of their education and arrived feeling deflated and fed up. The school is a breath of fresh air to them. Here, pupils feel accepted, valued and cherished. At Educate U, pupils can be their authentic selves, safe in the knowledge that staff will catch them if they fall. As their self-worth and confidence grow, so does pupils' hope for the future. Staff capitalise on this, helping pupils to work towards ambitious qualifications and career goals. Pupils beam with pride as they show off their writing, art and, more recently, their baking.

Pupils at the school have often found it hard to make friends. Staff help pupils to be a good friend and to expect the same from others. Pupils are kind towards each other, despite their different interests, beliefs and appearances. Although they may fall out from time-to-time, their squabbles never escalate into bullying. Pupils know that a key worker is always on hand to help them overcome any worries or relationship issues. Pupils are confident that staff will support them and keep them safe, telling inspectors 'they are on it.'

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

In a short time, the school has grown rapidly. Leaders have handled this change well, ensuring that the curriculum focuses on the key knowledge that pupils need to thrive. The curriculum is broad and covers a wide range of subjects. Mathematics and reading are prioritised, providing pupils with the right tools to access the rest of the curriculum.

The curriculum is organised in a range of ways. For example, in reading and mathematics, pupils follow a single scheme which develops their knowledge over time. In other subjects, leaders work with families, pupils and external agencies to develop a bespoke curriculum to support pupils' personal development. In these instances, staff follow the plans diligently and know what key knowledge to check pupils have remembered. In a small number of subjects, leaders have not yet outlined what pupils must learn with sufficient precision. When this is the case, pupils do not always build on their prior knowledge because plans are too vague.

On arrival, all pupils are assessed to check their reading ability. Staff use this information well, often taking pupils back to basics to ensure they have a secure grasp of phonics. This approach works. Pupils learn to recognise and pronounce any sounds they did not know previously and quickly get back on track. This helps pupils to access texts that interest and inspire them. For example, therapeutic books by Margot Sutherland become accessible to pupils and help them to manage a range of feelings and experiences. Older pupils put their reading skills to excellent use. They read fluently and enjoy texts such as *Lord of the Flies*, considering the relationships between characters and the motivation for their actions. Pupils in Years 10 and 11

work towards GCSE's in English literature and language; qualifications only made possible by their ability to read fluently.

Pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are considered at every stage. Staff use pupils' education, health and care plans as the basis of their work but go beyond these, identifying pupils' emerging needs and interests and incorporating these into their plans. Staff carefully check the progress that pupils make against their targets. They dovetail the therapeutic and the academic curriculum to make sure these two provisions support pupils' progress towards their goals.

Pupils learn to navigate the world outside of school. They learn to accept and respect those who look, think or identify differently to them. This culture of acceptance permeates the school, helping pupils to welcome new classmates and visitors with genuine joy and curiosity. Older pupils are guided to consider a range of careers and unpick the qualifications, attributes and experiences they will need to achieve these. Pupils are supported to take their next steps in education, employment or training and regularly meet college and apprenticeship providers to inform their future plans.

Pupils in the school behave well and are kind. They like working in small groups and learn to communicate when they are uncomfortable or anxious. Staff pick up on this quickly, helping to address any worries and supporting pupils to regulate. Incidents of poor behaviour and disruption are rare. Occasionally, pupils do require staff to intervene to keep them safe. When this is the case, it is done safely, and leaders have put in place effective plans to make sure incidents are not repeated. Leaders are in the process of refining these systems to reflect the larger pupil numbers at the school. Parents reported that their children love being at school and 'are ready at the door every morning.' For most pupils, attendance is very high.

The proprietors have managed the expansion of the school well. The site is well maintained, clean and safe. There is plenty of space, meaning pupils can always find a quiet area to learn, relax and decompress. Leaders have managed the recruitment of staff carefully, ensuring that staff with appropriate curriculum and SEND knowledge are in post to develop the school further. Staff report high levels of well-being as they feel valued by leaders and know their work has real purpose.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff are vetted and trained to a high standard before they begin working at the school. Staff know how to identify and report concerns; leaders waste no time when these are received. Leaders work closely with local agencies and the police to protect and support families. Importantly, they challenge these same agencies should they feel their response is not up to scratch.

Pupils learn to keep themselves safe. They learn how to make positive choices should others encourage them to engage in criminal and anti-social behaviour. Pupils learn how to manage their emotional response to stress and anger, reducing their inclination to lash out or become violent.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the proprietor)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders have not outlined the key content of the curriculum in sufficient detail. This means that pupils sometimes unnecessarily repeat or miss learning they need for the future. Leaders should ensure that all curriculum plans set out the key learning from Year 1 to Year 11 and identify precisely what pupils need to know before moving on.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	147546
DfE registration number	938/6004
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10202284
Type of school	Other Independent School
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	32
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietors	Susan Evans and Hayley Tucker
Headteacher	Victoria Read
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37, 000
Telephone number	01903 297906
Website	www.educateu.co.uk
Email address	victoria@educateu.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Educate U is an independent special school for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs. The majority of pupils have missed a significant amount of time in school previously.
- All pupils at the school have an education, health and care plan.
- The school uses four providers of alternative provision: all of which are unregistered. Pupils typically access these for less than a day a week.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders and the proprietors.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, personal, social and health education and geography. Inspectors talked to subject leaders, staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. Inspectors then considered a wider range of evidence to explore the effectiveness of the curriculum.
- The inspectors reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising safeguarding records, interviewing staff and through discussions with pupils.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents shared through the Ofsted surveys. They gathered the views of pupils and staff through surveys, interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Daniel Lambert, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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