

# Inspection of Serenity School

70 Court Road, Eltham, London SE9 5AH

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Inspection dates: 26 to 28 April 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Outstanding**

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The quality of education

**Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Outstanding**

Sixth-form provision

**Outstanding**

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 described this school as friendly and a place that helps them to learn and be successful. Leaders, teachers and support staff are highly successful in creating this positive climate. They give pupils the tools they need to live a fulfilling life regardless of the challenges they might face.

Staff meet each pupil's individual special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) needs effectively. They work in partnership to provide a rich range of support to help pupils overcome barriers to learning, whatever these may be. This extends from the well-planned curriculum that is tailored to each pupil, to the wide variety of therapeutic support. Teachers and teaching assistants use their in-depth knowledge of pupils' needs, and how to help them learn, to support pupils in getting the best possible progress in life.

Staff know how to manage pupils' behaviour and minimise disruption. Occasional incidents of disruption are dealt with calmly so that these rarely, if ever, get out of hand. Pupils said that if bullying happens, staff shut it down quickly and effectively. The safety of pupils is paramount. As a result, pupils learn in a safe and secure environment. Classrooms are places of learning where pupils are encouraged to engage enthusiastically with the planned work.

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

The curriculum is structured carefully to allow all pupils to succeed whatever their particular needs. Teachers use a range of assessment tools, including standardised tests, observations and informal checks, to ensure that they identify and understand pupils' individual requirements fully. Each pupil is given a personal, bespoke curriculum that is both demanding and matched carefully to these needs. These bespoke curriculums remain flexible, however, because staff are continually assessing how much pupils have learned to ensure that they are being given the right work at the right time. This work varies from helping pupils to develop important life and social skills to getting recognised qualifications in English and mathematics.

The curriculum is broad and ambitious. No pupils are denied access to the full range of subjects and activities. Teachers adapt their teaching skilfully to ensure that all pupils understand the important ideas. In lessons, learning is rarely interrupted as pupils settle to work promptly.

Matching the curriculum to pupils' individual, specific needs means that, for some, the programme is focused on developing emotional and social skills, and pupils' understanding of how to live healthily. This is the key to the school's success. Leaders have built a curriculum that ensures that all pupils, regardless of their starting points, reach their potential. For some, this will be achieving five accredited qualifications, including in English and mathematics. For others, being able to write their name, hold a conversation with an adult or understand appropriate

relationships will be significant achievements. However, the common thread for all is that they are enabled to achieve highly, and develop their self-confidence and independence to an appropriately high level.

All pupils experience a personal, social and health education programme that covers a comprehensive range of topics. Subject content is sequenced carefully to build pupils' awareness and understanding of the world. This includes relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education based on their individual needs. Statutory guidance in relation to RSE is followed effectively. Leaders have consulted with parents and carers on the RSE and health education curriculums and their right to withdraw their children from some aspects. Careers education is a key part of the curriculum, and leaders strive to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity for work experience.

Leaders ensure that pupils who are learning to read are taught using a structured approach to phonics. Pupils are able to use their knowledge of phonics to read new words. As pupils become proficient in sounding out words, they learn to read more fluently. This is because leaders have a structured approach to reading using a mixture of external schemes adapted to pupils' needs. The books that pupils read are matched well to their phonics knowledge.

Sixth-form students are equally well catered for. As a result, they achieve highly. For example, all go on to college, an apprenticeship or a job. No students are allowed to fall between the gaps. In classrooms, students are engaged and interested, sharing ideas with others readily. Their behaviour and attitudes are especially strong. They are supported to become mature and articulate young people, who are able to engage with different ideas and opinions.

The directors of the proprietor body and governors fulfil their statutory duties effectively. The independent school standards are met in full and the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The directors and governors hold leaders and teachers to account rigorously. For example, there are well-established procedures to monitor how well the curriculum supports pupils' learning. Support for teachers is strong, including in training and ensuring their well-being.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is of the highest priority for leaders, governors and staff. There are strong procedures to ensure that the vetting checks for staff follow government guidance and cover all the required areas. Safeguarding training is comprehensive, and record-keeping is detailed and up to date. As a result, all staff are aware of the safeguarding risks to pupils and know what to look out for.

Leaders and staff, including teaching assistants, therapists and mentors, know the pupils well. They are quick to identify where a pupil is in need of additional support

to promote their welfare. In-house therapists and staff act decisively to provide extra help quickly and efficiently.

The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website and reflects current government guidance.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	147991
<b>DfE registration number</b>	203/6009
<b>Local authority</b>	Greenwich
<b>Inspection number</b>	10210727
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	88
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	8
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Serenity School, Eltham Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Linda Brown
<b>Headteacher</b>	Richard Skyers
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£40,000 to £58,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8850 3366
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.serenityschool.org.uk">www.serenityschool.org.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:rskyers@serenityschool.org.uk">rskyers@serenityschool.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Serenity School is an independent special day school in the London Borough of Greenwich.
- This was the school's first standard inspection. The school was registered with the Department for Education (DfE) on 29 January 2021.
- The school caters for boys and girls aged from five to 18 years with a range of SEND. The school specialises in providing for pupils with autism spectrum disorder, as well as social, emotional and mental health needs.
- All pupils are placed by local authorities and have an education, health and care plan.
- The school uses a range of alternative provision, all of which is registered with the DfE.

## 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 had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, food technology, and science. They talked to pupils about their learning in these subjects and looked at their work. They met with subject and phase leaders, and teachers. Other subjects were also considered as part of this inspection.
- Inspectors also met with groups of pupils to discuss their views about the school, behaviour and safety.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and assistant headteachers, two of whom are also the school's designated safeguarding leads. Inspectors also held discussions with governors, including the directors of the proprietor body.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of policies and documents, including curriculum plans. They also checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documentation and safeguarding records and held discussions with leaders and staff.

## **Inspection team**

Brian Oppenheim, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Lloyd

Ofsted Inspector

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