

Inspection of Estuary High School

820 London Road, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 3NH

Inspection dates: 13 to 15 September 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Estuary High School is a unique place. It is more than a school, it is a place where pupils receive the help and care they need to manage complex emotions. Pupils who arrive at the school have often had a hard journey. Their education has been disrupted so they have gaps in their learning. The school provides pupils with a fresh start. It allows them to make up gaps in their education and supports them to successfully transfer to a suitable college course.

The school is a safe and nurturing environment. Pupils are given the space and support to manage their emotions. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm. Staff know the pupils well and take time to listen to them. Pupils like and respect the staff. One pupil summarised the thoughts of many, noting, 'We are listened to and the staff are brilliant. I couldn't ask for anything more.'

Pupils' interactions are closely managed. This supports them to make positive relationships with one another. Falling outs happen but this rarely escalates into bullying. This strong support network makes pupils feel safe and secure. Behaviour in lessons is good as pupils are keen to learn.

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

Leaders have a strong understanding of the pupils' needs and how best to meet these. All pupils arrive with gaps in their learning and join the school throughout the year. The processes for admitting and assessing pupils ensure that leaders have the right information to develop pupils' provision.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils. They expect high but achievable standards and have focused on the right things: developing an appropriate curriculum, personal development and ensuring behaviour is calm and focused. Pupils follow a broad curriculum. Leaders have, rightly, prioritised English, including reading, and mathematics. The mathematics and English curriculums identify the key facts pupils need to learn. Lessons follow a sequence that allows pupils to build up their knowledge and understanding.

Pupils have access to a wide range of reading materials. They read daily in class and are happy to read aloud to their classmates. As they progress through the school pupils develop into fluent confident readers.

In a small number of subjects, the curriculum is not planned as coherently as English and mathematics. Teachers have identified the topics pupils need to learn. However, they have not always identified the most important knowledge pupils need to know. Teachers do not always plan enough opportunities for pupils to revisit their learning and practise using this knowledge. As a result, pupils' knowledge and understanding is less secure in a few subjects.

Pupils work towards meaningful qualifications in English, mathematics and a range of other subjects. Pupils who have a specific interest and aptitude for a particular subject receive additional tuition, so they are prepared to sit further examinations.

The school is a calm and purposeful environment. Pupils show improving levels of self-control and are generally respectful towards each other. They learn strategies that help them to manage their anxieties. Pupils have a quiet space to calm down if they need it. They use this appropriately. Staff's consistent and calm approach to managing behaviour contributes positively to pupils' learning. Pupils are rightly proud of their achievements. Their confidence increases as they spend more time at the school.

The close working relationship between the school's staff, therapists and care staff is a strength. They work together to plan the bespoke delivery of aspects of the personal, social and health education curriculum. Close interweaving of shared values and practices promote pupils' personal development effectively. Pupils learn to respect people's differences and how to behave in society.

The personal development programme is well thought out. Pupils are provided with opportunities ranging from visits to the theatre and museums to outdoor activity days. Pupils receive individual, independent careers advice. They each have a career plan, which helps them to progress towards employment. Almost all pupils progress to college when they leave school.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They value leaders' consideration of staff workload. Staff appreciate the training opportunities offered.

The proprietor has a clear understanding of her responsibilities. She has a structure for monitoring the quality of the school's work and holding leaders to account. The proprietor ensures that the independent schools standards are consistently met. The school's website provides parents with the information they require, such as the school's safeguarding policy and complaints procedure. The school site is safe because health and safety policies and procedures are followed rigorously. The proprietor ensures that the school complies with the 2010 Equality Act.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Checks on staff's suitability to work in school are thorough and completed promptly. Safeguarding policies and procedures follow the latest statutory guidance. Leaders ensure staff receive comprehensive and up-to-date safeguarding training. Staff understand exceptionally well their role in helping pupils stay safe. Leaders' systems to share information with others who work with pupils are effective. Leaders monitor safeguarding and behaviour information closely to identify any emerging patterns. Leaders act swiftly to keep pupils safe.

Pupils are taught to manage risks. This work is proactive and enables pupils to identify the consequences of their actions on themselves and others.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders have not ensured that the curriculum has been coherently planned across the topics being taught. The important knowledge that pupils should learn has not been identified in sufficient detail. Pupils sometimes miss out on opportunities to revisit important learning and practise using their knowledge. This means that pupils are less secure in their understanding of the subject. Leaders should ensure that all curriculum plans identify precisely the knowledge that pupils need to know and remember. Teachers should plan opportunities for pupils to revisit and practise using important knowledge 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.

School details

Unique reference number	134940
DfE registration number	882/6053
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	10243306
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	13 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	6
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Roz Parsons
Headteacher	Julie Archer
Annual fees (day pupils)	£27,612
Telephone number	01702483999
Website	www.kitescs.com
Email address	julie@estuaryhigh.com
Date of previous inspection	1–3 May 2018

Information about this school

- Estuary High School is an independent special school for up to 10 pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Estuary High School's most recent standard inspection was in May 2018 when the overall effectiveness was judged to be good. The school underwent a standard inspection in June 2015 when it was also graded good.
- There has been a change in proprietor since the previous standard inspection. The school is now part of Kites Children's Services. This service provides residential care, therapeutic services and education.
- There are currently six pupils on roll. All have missed a significant amount of time in school previously.
- All pupils in the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Four pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- All pupils are children looked after and have been placed in the school by a number of local authorities.
- The school does not make use of alternative providers.

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 the school 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 and head of services. They had telephone conversations with two members of the steering group and the proprietor.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, including reading, art and physical education. For each deep dive inspectors talked to subject leaders, staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.
- Inspectors also 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.
- There were no responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors collected the views of pupils and staff through discussions.

Inspection team

Caroline Pardy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Daniel Lambert

His Majesty's Inspector

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