

Inspection of ISP School

Glengorse Estate, Glengorse, Battle TN33 0TX

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 November 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

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

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a new school with high aspirations and a fast-developing ethos of nurture and respect. Pupils are playing their own important part as routines become established and traditions are built. Thrice-daily community meetings ensure that important key information is shared between staff and pupils alike. Pupils often enjoy the responsibility of chairing these communal gatherings themselves. Older pupils see this as part of their own contribution to building a community where expectations are high and successes are celebrated.

Pupils generally behave well. Staff are skilled at providing the encouragement and support needed when pupils become anxious or lack confidence. They understand that rebuilding pupils' self-esteem and sense of belonging is a prerequisite of successful learning.

Pupils are proud of their school. They see it as a friendly place where people mostly get on well. One pupil talked happily about making friends on his 'taster day' before starting. Another told the inspector that he felt it was, 'Kind of nice to be in a school where coming from a different background isn't a problem.' Other pupils agreed when the same pupil said, 'People with differences aren't indulged. There's an equilibrium, so we are all treated the same, no matter what our background.'

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

Leaders have a clear vision for the school. They want it to be excellent in all respects. They know what is working well. They recognise what needs to be better and are addressing areas that need to be developed further, including ensuring that pupils' absence is kept to a minimum.

The school's curriculum is evolving. Staff realise that having a curriculum on paper is not enough. This is especially the case for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders know and understand very well the other factors that have an impact on the school's curriculum offer. Some are positive, not least the dedication of staff. However, this is a small school with a small staff base. Many pupils have been out of education for extended periods (sometimes measured in years) before joining. Pupils have diverse interests. Few have been at this school for more than a few months. Many pupils join in key stage 4. Despite the challenges, staff are successful in drawing out the best in pupils. This means that pupils' confidence in what can be achieved is growing.

Classroom visits showed pupils to be working hard and staff working harder. Ordinarily, this might be seen as the wrong way round. However, teachers understand that planning learning that challenges pupils, while providing them with opportunities to succeed, is the immediate imperative. This balance is not easily achieved, especially when pupils' complex needs are taken into account. However, teachers constantly assess pupils' understanding and are skilled at reshaping their

teaching in the moment. The result of this is that pupils' needs are being met over time and their progress through the curriculum is accelerating.

Subjects such as mathematics, English, science, and personal, social and health education (PSHE) form the backbone of the school's curriculum. Pupils also study a range of vocational subjects, including performing arts, land-based studies and food technology. All pupils in the current Year 11 are expected to take GCSEs in biology, mathematics and English this year. Leaders know that developing other curriculum options needs to be made a priority as the school gradually expands over time.

Pupils' social and emotional development is given a high priority here. Expectations of their behaviour and engagement in learning are high. Pupils are expected to be respectful and to try their best at all times. When this is not the case, staff are understanding but firm.

Pupils are positive about the way the school supports them to be safe and to understand the world around them. The school's physical environment provides them with an inspirational setting in which to learn. The wider curriculum is designed to be meaningful and to prepare pupils for life beyond school. Pupils describe how they believe that weekly sessions that focus on world events help bring the whole school together. These sessions build on their understanding of equalities, diversity and different cultures and values. They also enable pupils to discuss their own views in a safe environment.

Older pupils explained that they feel a sense of belonging here. When asked, they are keen to share what they think would improve the school. Interestingly, their opinions are not in the least negative. Nor are they in any sense self-centred or self-serving. Their belief that expanding the school to provide post-16 provision for those who would benefit from an additional year here seems entirely sensible.

Ofsted's parent survey was 100% positive about all aspects of the school. However, leaders are keen to involve parents more as the school moves forward. Governance is provided by members of a local governing board, many of whom work for the proprietor company. The proprietor also provides additional expertise in areas such as human resources and finance, helping the school to meet the independent school standards consistently and over time. While this arrangement is proving successful, leaders are hoping to expand the board to include parental representation as soon as possible.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders know pupils and their families well. All parents or carers who responded to Ofsted's survey agreed that their children feel safe here. Staff understand the additional vulnerabilities of pupils who attend the school. Communication is open and honest. Staff are not afraid to ask questions when they have doubts or feel unsure. Their training is up to date, live, in the moment and ongoing.

Leaders are knowledgeable and take their duty to safeguard pupils seriously. They understand when and where to seek help or advice if needed. This includes outside the school from social care or other safeguarding professionals.

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

- The school's curriculum does not have the breadth that leaders would like. This includes for the school's vocational offer. Not all subjects are covered in as much depth or to the point where pupils can currently gain qualifications. This is particularly the case for the humanities and for modern foreign languages. Despite this being a small school, leaders should work to provide flexible solutions to solve this aspect of the school's curriculum provision.
- Some pupils do not attend the school as much as they could or should. Leaders need to redouble their efforts to reduce absence so that more pupils attend the school more of the time. This is especially important for older pupils and, in particular, those who have been out of education for extended periods prior to joining. This will mean that all pupils benefit from the excellent pastoral care and good quality of education the school provides. It will also ensure that more pupils achieve the qualifications they require to access the college courses or apprenticeships they aspire to.

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	148552
DfE registration number	845/6067
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10232334
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent School
Age range of pupils	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	24
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Integrated Services Programme
Chair	Jo August
Headteacher	Caroline Belchem
Annual fees (day pupils)	£52,000
Telephone number	01424 238 640
Website	ispschools.org.uk/battle
Email address	zena.maher@ispschools.org.uk

Information about this school

- This is a special school providing education for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties, as well as communication and interaction, and cognition and learning needs. Pupils may well have associated conditions such as autism spectrum disorder and/or sensory or physical needs.
- All pupils are placed by local authorities and have education, health and care plans. Many have been out of education for long periods before joining the school.
- This was the first standard inspection since the school opened in September 2021.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.

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.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held a wide range of meetings with the headteacher, other leaders and teaching and support staff.
- The inspector held an online meeting with the chair of the proprietor body and also met with the chair of the local governing body. He also talked on the telephone to two different representatives of local authorities that place pupils at the school.
- The inspector talked informally and formally to different groups and individual pupils to gather their views about the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and PSHE. Deep dives included visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work, and talking to leaders, teachers and pupils about how teaching in these subjects builds on pupils' knowledge over time.
- The inspector had a tour of the school's premises and accommodation. He checked a range of policies and documents, including the school's single central record. He also reviewed the school's website and other records regarding the welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff linked to the independent school standards.

- The inspector gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour, the school's wider curriculum offer and how leaders support staff with their workload. He also considered the views of parents submitted through Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. Ofsted's surveys for staff and for pupils were also considered.

Inspection team

Clive Close

His Majesty's Inspector

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