

Inspection of Teasel down School

Sugar Loaves, 175 Swan Street, Sible Hedingham, Halstead, Essex CO9 3PX

Inspection dates: 27 to 29 June 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Insufficient evidence

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Teaseldown is a safe and settled place to learn. Pupils come to the school after a previously disrupted education experience. Pupils' needs are met right from the start through the well-planned transition arrangements. This helps them to settle quickly. Across three different sites, pupils get skilful support from caring staff. As a result, they re-engage with their education. Parents are grateful for the progress their children make.

Pupils learn a coherent curriculum. They benefit from the high expectations for their learning and behaviour. The one-to-one lessons mostly help pupils focus and work hard. Pupils build up their knowledge over time.

Pupils respond positively to the clear routines. At breaktimes, they mix comfortably with each other and staff. Incidents of difficult behaviour are not common. If they happen, they are quickly resolved. Pupils learn to regulate themselves because they feel supported rather than blamed. Bullying is rare.

Pupils' personal development is extended through wider activities. For example, pupils recently took part in a science activity day and art installation. Pupils get a lot of help with planning their next steps. They regularly meet employers and visit local colleges. Consequently, almost all pupils move on to further education, training or employment.

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

Leaders have put an ambitious curriculum in place that meets pupils' needs. It identifies what pupils need to know to learn successfully. The curriculum breaks down the learning that pupils should understand and remember, such as important subject vocabulary. Staff help pupils connect new content to what they have learned before. As a result, pupils develop detailed knowledge across different subjects.

The curriculum planning is clear. This supports staff to teach it effectively. They are well trained and have sufficient subject knowledge. Teachers plan learning activities that help pupils understand and remember the key knowledge. Staff are adept at adapting their teaching to support pupils' individual needs. For example, they help pupils in mathematics practise what they learn in ways that enhance their understanding. This means that pupils achieve well.

Leaders' therapeutic approach helps pupils to access the curriculum. Pupils' needs are identified accurately, such as through initial assessments when they join the school. Leaders and staff work closely to set and review well-considered targets. These help pupils make progress. In lessons, staff check learning closely, and correct pupils' misconceptions. Pupils understand that mistakes are part of the learning process. This enables them to develop their confidence and independence.

Reading is prioritised. If pupils need extra support with reading, they get it. This helps them to access the curriculum and develop an enjoyment of books.

Leaders' behaviour policy is effective. It is clearly understood by staff and pupils. Staff know how to de-escalate any behaviour incidents. Sanctions are rarely needed. Pupils' behaviour improves over time.

Pupils receive careful support to develop their personal and social skills. Leaders track what pupils need in terms of their learning and experience. Leaders ensure this is provided. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. They get strong careers education. Pupils learn in detail about important areas such as consent, democracy and different types of societies. However, because teaching is typically delivered through one-to-one lessons, pupils do not get sufficient opportunities to discuss complex and difficult ideas with their peers. This means pupils do not build up the engagement and rich understanding that they could.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They value the collaborative approach that leaders take. For example, leaders create research groups in areas they want to improve. This motivates staff and supports their professional development.

Since the previous standard inspection, the joint proprietors have reviewed many aspects of provision, especially the curriculum. They have successfully rectified the issues that required improvement. The proprietors regularly check the effectiveness of their work to improve the school. They ensure they get external support and input when they need it. While this is the case, the proprietors' processes to oversee some aspects of provision, such as attendance, are not robust enough. This has the potential to limit improvement in the future.

The proprietors ensure that all the independent school standards are met. The single central register shows that the correct recruitment checks are made on new staff. Health and safety and risk assessment are embedded throughout leaders' work. Fire and first-aid processes are appropriate. The sites are fit for purpose. The outdoor play areas are small, but staff mitigate this by taking pupils to parks which are near to all three sites. Leaders make available all the required information for parents and local authorities. There are suitable policies for areas such as safeguarding, complaints, and relationships, health and sex education. The proprietors ensure the school complies with the Equalities Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders take the right actions to keep children safe. They keep their knowledge up to date. This includes changes to statutory safeguarding guidance. Staff support vulnerable pupils and their families well, including with their well-being. Staff receive regular and suitable safeguarding training. They mostly remember and apply this

appropriately. Occasionally, staff's understanding of when and how to report low-level concerns is not as clear as it should be.

The curriculum teaches pupils thoroughly about a range of risks, such as drugs, harassment and when online. Pupils see the importance of this. They learn what they need to stay safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- PSHE lessons are mostly delivered one-to-one. Pupils do not get as many opportunities to discuss their views and hear those of others. This means they do not develop the depth of understanding of complex issues that they could. Leaders should develop more opportunities for pupils to discuss and explore the content of the PSHE curriculum with their peers. This will increase their engagement and enrich their understanding of important issues.
- In a few areas, leaders' systems to check on the quality of provision are not as rigorous as they could be. This means they do not always have the clear information they need to make the best decisions to improve the school. Leaders need to review their systems for checking on the quality of provision. This will support leaders to take the right actions that will continue to make the school better for pupils.
- Not all staff are as clear as they should be on their responsibilities to report low-level concerns. While the school is a safe place for pupils, this creates the potential for actions to be missed that would keep pupils safe. Leaders must ensure that staff get the training they need so that staff understand their responsibilities to report all concerns effectively.

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	135837
DfE registration number	881/6060
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10267649
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	27
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Hazel Bunting and Brett Runchman
Headteacher	Hazel Bunting
Annual fees (day pupils)	£52,020 to £68,043
Telephone number	07769 272 463
Website	www.exceptional-ideasltd.co.uk
Email address	brett@exceptional-ideas.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	14 to 16 September 2021

Information about this school

- Teaseldown is an independent day special school. It is owned by two directors who also make up the proprietor body. The school occupies three sites in Essex: Teaseldown at Sible Hedingham; Primrose Hill at 16a Primrose Hill, Chelmsford CM1 2RQ; and Brook View at Braintree Road, Wethersfield CM7 4BU.
- The school combines therapeutic and educational provision to meet the needs of boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 19 years. Pupils have a range of diagnoses, including autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and specific learning difficulties. Currently, there are no students attending the school in post-16 provision.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Pupils are funded by local authorities in Essex, Suffolk and Hertfordshire.
- The school does not use supply staff.
- Leaders use one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school's inspection history:
 - In July 2022, the DfE commissioned a progress monitoring inspection. All the independent school standards that were checked were met.
 - In January 2022, the proprietors submitted an action plan explaining how they intended to address the independent school standards that had not been met at the previous standard inspection. This was evaluated by Ofsted and deemed not acceptable.
 - In September 2021, Ofsted conducted a standard inspection. The school was judged to require improvement.
 - In May 2017, Ofsted conducted a standard inspection. The school was judged to be good.
 - In October 2015, a material change inspection increased the school's admission number from 22 to 29, and extended the age range from 11 to 16 years to 11 to 19 years.
 - In September 2015, the school opened a third site at Brook View in Wethersfield with five pupils on roll, aged 11 to 15.
 - In July 2015, the proprietor body was granted temporary permission by the DfE to increase the school's maximum admission number to 22 pupils across the two sites.
 - In March 2015, Teaseldown School relocated to Sible Hedingham. A material change inspection verified the suitability of the new premises for the number of pupils on roll and, additionally, the suitability of the new curriculum for post-16 students.

- In November 2013, a standard inspection judged the overall effectiveness of the school to be good. At that time, the school operated from two sites: Teaseldown School in Ridgewell and Primrose Hill in Chelmsford.
- In July 2013, a material change inspection extended the school's maximum admission number from eight to 13 pupils.
- The school's first standard inspection was in May 2010. The overall effectiveness of the school was judged to be good.

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 second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held meetings with the joint proprietors, one of whom is the headteacher, other leaders, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, met with teachers, met with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- As part of the evaluation of safeguarding, inspectors checked the school's single central register of recruitment and vetting checks, considered its safeguarding policy and procedures, and spoke to leaders, staff and pupils.
- As part of checking compliance with the independent school standards, and evaluating other areas of provision, inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils, and scrutinised a range of policies and documents. They checked the safety and appropriateness of all three school sites.
- There were too few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, for inspectors to evaluate. Inspectors considered the small number of free-text responses submitted by parents during the inspection. Inspectors considered the 30 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff, and the nine responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

Charlie Fordham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sue Cox

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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