

Inspection of East London Independent School

Welfare Road, Stratford, London E15 4HT

Inspection dates: 15 to 17 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils arrive at this school having experienced significant disruption to their education. Many have been permanently excluded from previous settings. When pupils join the school, leaders find out what pupils like and what they are good at. They build on this and create a network of support around each pupil to help them succeed.

The school's culture is one where staff never give up. Staff build the trust of pupils and families. This school helps pupils to enjoy learning again. Over time, thanks to the excellent teamwork of staff, including teachers and therapists, pupils' behaviour, attendance and learning improve significantly. Pupils leave this school with the skills, qualities and confidence they need for future learning.

As they move through the school, pupils' independence and resilience strengthen. Pupils take seriously their responsibilities. For example, older pupils take on roles such as gardener's assistant, kitchen monitors and student council representatives. Younger pupils each played a part in setting up the carnival which marked the end of Black History Month.

Leaders deal with all incidents properly, including any bullying. Staff keep pupils safe in school and when they are out and about on visits to places like the park and the docks. Pupils like it when staff spot them doing the right thing, especially when they demonstrate good leadership skills. When this happens, pupils earn 'CatchYa' cards. They like watching these mount up over the term to find out who has won the voucher prize.

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

Leaders, governors and staff all share the same purpose and goal. This is to do whatever is needed to help each pupil to achieve their best both personally and academically.

Therapists and teachers work together to identify and meet pupils' needs. Staff help parents and carers to understand strategies that can be used at home. This joined up way of working continues as pupils move through the school. Staff hold regular and well-thought-out meetings to check pupils' learning and development. Pupils' 'pathway plans' help everyone to understand what each pupil needs and when.

In small steps, leaders help pupils to build up their confidence in readiness for learning. The academic part of the curriculum aims to address any gaps in pupils' learning, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. In addition, pupils study a broad range of other subjects.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils' academic achievements. They have developed a curriculum which intends for pupils to build up their knowledge and skills over time. Pupils achieve well. However, in some subjects, leaders have not considered

carefully enough what pupils need to know and in what order. Occasionally, what pupils are taught does not build well on their previous learning, including in the sixth form. This affects how well they remember things for future learning.

In the primary phase, staff use a well-sequenced phonics programme which helps pupils to read fluently and accurately. This approach is also used for older pupils if and when they need it. It works well and tackles the gaps in pupils' knowledge. Throughout the school, pupils enjoy the special time each day which is devoted to reading. At this time, everyone, including the staff, stops what they are doing and gets their heads into a book. Pupils in the primary phase came up with some insightful questions to ask the character in their class text. Pupils in the secondary phase reflected on how much they enjoy reading now compared to the past. They read with increasing confidence and understanding.

Leaders make sure that older pupils are well supported to get suitable qualifications in order to move on to further education or employment. Pupils in Year 11 and the sixth form were keen to talk about their future plans, including college courses in bricklaying, fashion and plumbing. They said that without the help of the staff at this school, they would not have been able to succeed.

The school's 'Life Programme' teaches pupils a range of important concepts that they will need in the future, including in the world of work. It includes independent careers advice which is well matched to each pupil's needs and aspirations.

Pupils learn about their own needs and those of others. 'Group Process' is a time where pupils come together to consider and reflect on a range of issues, including managing difficult situations and anger. Pupils said that these sessions make a real difference. For example, pupils reflected on what their anger looked like a few years ago to what it looks like now. Pupils said that they have been taught to talk through their emotions rather than hitting out and hurting themselves and others. Pupils behave well in lessons. They develop positive relationships with staff. Some ex-pupils have returned to the school as employees. Pupils said these are particularly good role models for them. This all helps pupils to become positive about learning. They want to do well.

Leaders ensure that the statutory guidance on relationships and sex education (RSE) is followed. For example, pupils learn in an age-appropriate way about important topics, such as healthy friendships, consensual behaviour and the effects of drugs and alcohol on their bodies. Staff provide different opportunities to enrich pupils' learning. For example, pupils take part in trips in the local area, sports competitions and music performances.

The student council makes a difference to what happens in school. These ambassadors act as excellent role models and aim to help others to behave well and influence change. For example, recently, the student council has been involved in bidding for an on-site gym.

The proprietor and governors are highly experienced and drive the school forward with determination and integrity. They have established strong and embedded procedures for checking the quality of education and safeguarding in the school. They have ensured that the independent school standards are met. The proprietor ensures that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Staff know that the job they do is often challenging. But they also know the positive difference they make to pupils' lives. Staff said they feel well supported by leaders in managing their workload and in supporting pupils' needs. Leaders provide many opportunities for staff to obtain qualifications and develop their careers.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Governors ensure that all the required staff suitability checks are undertaken. They ensure that all concerns, including allegations, are dealt with appropriately.

Leaders responsible for safeguarding have established a culture where staff are vigilant and always alert to pupils' welfare. Staff are well trained to understand the contexts of pupils' circumstances both in and out of school. Leaders make sure that all staff understand how to identify, report and record any concerns.

The school has a significant caseload of pupils who are known to other services, including social services. Leaders work diligently to ensure that everyone is doing what is needed to keep pupils safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In some subjects, leaders have not considered the order in which pupils should learn new things. In some units of work or topics, it is not clear precisely what pupils need to know. Sometimes, this makes it difficult for teachers to build securely on pupils' prior knowledge. Leaders should refine further the curriculum to ensure that what pupils need to learn in each subject is carefully sequenced to enable pupils to build up their knowledge securely over time.

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	136052
DfE registration number	316/6072
Local authority	Newham
Inspection number	10242742
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	116
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	14
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Thomas Keaney
Headteacher	Adele Stedman (executive headteacher) Jeff Lastiotis (head of school) Soumaya Selmi (head of primary)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£59,500 to £88,000
Telephone number	020 8555 6737
Website	www.tces.org.uk/schools/east-london
Email address	admin.elis@tces.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	10 to 12 July 2018

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection there have been changes to staffing, including among the senior leadership team.
- The school now has three sites:
 - East London Independent School, Welfare Road, London E15 4HT
 - Create Primary, Queens Road, Barking, Essex IG11 8GD
 - Varley Road, London E16 3NR.
- The main site at Welfare Road accommodates pupils aged seven to 19. The Create Primary site opened to pupils in April 2021 and admits pupils in Years 3 to 6. The Varley Road site had no pupils at the time of this inspection. Ordinarily, it would cater for pupils aged seven to 14.
- All pupils have education, health and care plans. The school caters for neurodiverse pupils with autism spectrum disorder, social, emotional and mental health needs and other associated conditions.
- The school's previous full standard inspection took place in July 2018.
- The school does not 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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school 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.
- Inspectors held meetings with the proprietor, governors and the executive headteacher. They visited all three sites and met with the head of school, the head of primary and other senior leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history, art and personal, social, health and economics education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans for other subjects in both the primary and secondary phases, including the sixth form. Inspectors looked at pupils' workbooks and reading records. Inspectors heard pupils read.
- The lead inspector met with leaders responsible for safeguarding and reviewed the single central record of staff suitability checks. Inspectors spoke with pupils and staff about the school's safeguarding arrangements. An inspector held a telephone conversation with the school's governor responsible for safeguarding.

- Inspectors toured the premises and reviewed a range of documentation to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors held meetings with pupils and staff. They reviewed the responses to the staff and pupil survey. Inspectors reviewed the free-text responses to Ofsted Parent View.

The school's proposed change to the maximum number of pupils

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.**
- The school has applied to increase the maximum number of pupils on roll from 139 to 188. Leaders propose to increase the registration on the Welfare Road, London E15 4HT site from 70 to 96. They propose to increase the registered number of pupils on the Varley Road, London E16 3NR from 49 to 72.

This inspection recommends the increase to the maximum number of pupils on the main site. However, this inspection only recommends a maximum of 70 pupils at the Varley Road site.

Information about the material change inspection

- An inspector visited both sites to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards. They checked the space available to pupils on both sites, including outdoor provision. They looked at whether or not the spaces available, including classrooms and other shared areas, are suitable to accommodate the proposed increase to the maximum number of pupils.

Inspection team

Gary Rawlings, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Gary Pocock	Ofsted Inspector
Gaynor Roberts	His Majesty's Inspector

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