

# ISP School (Kent)

Conyer Road, Teynham, Kent ME9 9EA

## Inspection dates

15–17 January 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The school has improved rapidly since the headteacher joined a year ago. Leaders and governors have ensured that the independent school standards are met. Leaders know the school's strengths and the areas left to improve.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are effective. There are strong working relationships between mentors, therapists and psychologists. Staff share the headteacher's high expectations and aspirations for pupils' futures. All pupils who left the school last year have gone on to further education or training.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils' personal development is strong. Behaviour has improved because pupils understand more about the consequences of their actions.
- Middle leaders are new in post. They are currently not fully accountable for pupils' progress in the areas that they are responsible for.
- The curriculum ensures that pupils develop effective skills in English and mathematics. Additionally, pupils have many opportunities to develop their sporting, technical and artistic skills.
- Pupils make strong progress in many subjects, including reading and writing. However, in mathematics progress sometimes slows because work does not always match pupils' abilities.
- Governors have overseen the important steps in the school's journey to improvement. However, the structure of governance has resulted in some delays in the decision-making process. Governance has recently restructured. It is still in the early days of clarifying roles and in providing the strategic direction for the school.
- Work experience opportunities are currently often limited to countryside placements. There are too few opportunities for other placements such as in retail and hair and beauty.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management, by:
  - making sure that the new governing body clarifies its roles and responsibilities so that it provides a clear strategic direction for the school
  - developing the roles of middle leaders so they take more accountability for pupils' progress in their areas of responsibility
  - improving the range of work experience opportunities offered to pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, by:
  - ensuring that pupils make strong progress in mathematics and providing work that is well matched to their needs.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- This school has been transformed since the previous inspection. The new headteacher and other leaders and governors have systematically improved all aspects of the school. Safeguarding is now highly effective. The quality of teaching is good. Pupils are happy and flourish. All of the independent school standards are met.
- Aspirations have improved significantly. Staff are committed to improving the life chances of the pupils in their care. They now have much higher expectations regarding the quality of pupils' work. This in turn has led to pupils achieving better outcomes and having clear plans and ambitions for the future. All pupils who left the school last year are now in further education and training. Current pupils who are about to leave this summer all have plans to further their studies at a range of colleges.
- After the findings of the previous report, leaders worked hard to regain the trust of parents. Communication is now very regular. As a result, parents feel confident about the school and enjoy being fully involved in their children's education. One parent summed up the views of many when they said, 'I cannot say enough good things about this school. I get calls about how well my son is doing and not how badly! Previously, I thought about moving him but wouldn't now.'
- Parents value the regular open mornings where they can celebrate their children's work. All parents who responded to the Ofsted survey Parent View, would recommend the school to another parent.
- The new headteacher has used her considerable expertise to completely change the culture of this school. To do this she has established weekly 'operations reports'. These monitor in exceptional detail all aspects of pupils' personal and academic development.
- Senior leaders have provided effective challenge and support to help staff to make the necessary improvements. Staff are fully supportive of leaders. Leaders are now starting to develop middle leadership so that they can take more accountability for pupils' progress in their areas of responsibility. At present, this is in its early stages of development.
- Staff have a clear understanding of the wide-ranging needs of pupils. They, together with therapists and psychologists, work together as a cohesive team to check the progress of pupils. They decide jointly where additional support is needed. All staff who answered the Ofsted questionnaire said that they have a clear understanding of the school's aims and goals. They consider that this school has improved, 'almost beyond recognition' since the time of the previous inspection.
- The curriculum is well designed. It is well aligned to the school's vision and aims of preparing pupils for their future lives. It provides opportunities for pupils to further their skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils also develop skills in a broad range of other subjects, such as food technology, employability skills and outdoor education. They enjoy the extra-curricular clubs in craft, singing and sports.

- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is delivered through a comprehensive personal development programme. It ensures that pupils learn about fundamental British values such as democracy, the rule of law and tolerance and respect for others. There are good links with the local church. The school is rapidly becoming an important part of the local community.
- Pupils have effective individual careers advice and guidance as they prepare for the next stage of their education, training or employment. However, work placements are too limited in range. Mainly, pupils have placements that relate to the countryside. There are currently too few experiences offered in areas such as retail, construction and hair and beauty.

## **Governance**

- Up until recently the governance structure of the school was very unclear. Different companies within the hierarchy of companies that own the school were responsible for different aspects of governance. So, although there was governance oversight, decisions related to finance and recruitment were often made quite slowly. This had an impact on the smooth running of the school.
- Individual governors have a comprehensive understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They recognised that the structure of governance was problematic. They have very recently set up a new governing body with a clear scheme of delegation. Governors are still in the process of developing roles and responsibilities to ensure a clear strategic direction for the school.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- In this small school members of staff know the pupils well. The designated safeguarding lead and the headteacher are passionate about ensuring pupils' safety. Staff are very alert to any changes in pupils' behaviour. No concerns are overlooked or dismissed. Record-keeping is exceptional. There is effective work with external agencies to ensure that pupils receive the right support quickly.
- The school's safeguarding policy meets the current government requirements. It is carefully implemented and is available for parents and carers on the school's website.
- The school is a safe environment. Pupils who were spoken to all agree that they feel safe and secure at this school.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Leaders have taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching. It is now good across the school. Staff understand the barriers to learning that many pupils have experienced in the past. They work hard to help pupils learn in ways that best suit their needs.

- Leaders have put in place a rigorous system of assessing pupils' prior learning when they first start the school. This ensures that pupils usually make a strong start to their learning because work is well matched to their abilities. But in mathematics staff are not always as precise in assessing where pupils are in their learning. Consequently, work is sometimes provided that does not match pupils' abilities. When this happens, progress slows.
- Staff provide parents and carers with regular information about their children's progress. This is very much appreciated by parents. A parent wrote, 'My child has come on in leaps and bounds at ISP school. The teachers are so helpful and very caring. They always keep me in the loop on a daily basis. I cannot say enough good things about this school.'
- Therapy is well used to help those pupils who need extra support, such as in developing their speech and language skills. The educational psychologist provides useful assessments of pupils' needs.
- Staff help pupils to develop a positive approach to learning. In practical activities staff ensure that pupils develop a growing confidence in using equipment, such as saws and screwdrivers. Pupils are rightly proud of the sheds that they have made.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils often enter the school with low self-esteem. Some have previously had very negative experiences of school. Staff have a good understanding of each pupil's circumstances. Pupils who are new to the school gradually learn to develop their trust in staff. They recognise that staff have their best interests at heart.
- Pupils say that the recently introduced mentoring system has been very useful. High-quality pastoral support helps pupils to make good strides in their personal and social development. Mentors take every opportunity to help pupils to develop greater self-awareness. They help pupils to become successful learners by boosting their confidence and sense of self belief.
- Pupils learn how to stay safe, including when they are online. Pupils know about the dangers associated with social media. Older pupils learn how to stay safe when travelling independently by public transport.
- Pupils who answered the Ofsted questionnaire consider that although bullying occasionally happens at this school staff are good at sorting out problems quickly.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils attend regularly. Staff follow up absences very carefully; they make visits to pupils' homes if needed. The school has been very effective in reducing rates of persistent absence.

- The school has a clear behaviour policy that is well implemented. Staff record pupils' conduct and attitudes in every lesson. Although there have been some fixed-term exclusions, these are now diminishing as good behaviour is now more firmly established across the school.
- Pupils typically conduct themselves well around the school. Learning is rarely disrupted; however, if pupils do take time out of class, the number of minutes out are recorded. Pupils' mentors work with them to make up lost learning time. Similarly, on the rare occasions where property is damaged, pupils work with the school caretaker to put it right.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

### **Good**

- Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make good progress in a wide range of subjects from their individual starting points.
- Reading is an integral part of the school. Many pupils have made substantial progress in developing strong reading skills. For those who enter the school with limited abilities in reading, staff ensure that these pupils develop effective phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) skills. As one parent said, 'I never thought my son would read but to actually enjoy it and ask him to stop reading to go to bed is amazing.'
- Pupils often make good progress in developing their writing skills. This is because staff provide many opportunities for pupils to write in many curriculum subjects. For example, pupils wrote vivid accounts of their visit to a local maritime museum.
- In mathematics, pupils apply their knowledge to answer real-life problems. They often build their confidence and skills through practical experiences, such as in games and role play. Some pupils have a good understanding of mathematical concepts, such as probability.
- Pupils make strong progress in food technology. They have a good understanding of the different food groups. They know what constitutes a healthy diet. Pupils are competent cooks. They accurately follow recipes and create nutritious meals, such as tomato pasta.
- In art, pupils develop effective skills in line drawing and shading. Some work in portfolios is particularly detailed, with pupils demonstrating a clear understanding of colour and form. Many pupils have a good understanding of the work of famous artists.
- Leaders prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education, training or employment. Outcomes are improving rapidly. Last year all pupils left the school with a range of qualifications from entry level to GCSE.

## School details

Unique reference number	119015
DfE registration number	886/6065
Inspection number	10056670

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	33
Proprietor	Jo August
Chair	Jo August
Headteacher	Mary McKeeman
Annual fees (day pupils)	£38,296–£53,924
Telephone number	01795 523900
Website	<a href="http://ispchildcare.org.uk/under-construction">ispchildcare.org.uk/under-construction</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:franca.baker@ispchildcare.org.uk">franca.baker@ispchildcare.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	27–29 June 2017

## Information about this school

- ISP School (Kent) is a small special school located in rural Kent. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Pupils have social, emotional and mental health difficulties or autistic spectrum disorder as their primary need. A few pupils have additional needs, such as speech, language and communication difficulties. Many pupils have had periods of time out of school or have been excluded from their previous schools.

- The school is registered for pupils who are aged between seven and 18. Currently, pupils on roll are aged between seven and 16. The percentage of pupils who are disadvantaged is well above the national average.
- At the previous standard inspection in June 2017, the school was graded as inadequate, with several unmet independent school standards. At the monitoring visit in May 2018 all the independent school standards that were checked were found to be met. A material change inspection took place in October 2018. This was commissioned because the school proposed to increase the pupil numbers from 34 to 42. To facilitate these extra pupils the school built a new teaching block at its site at Teynham. All pupils are now educated at Teynham. The school has very recently closed its other site at Church Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3EG, which was the school's registered address. The Department for Education has been advised.
- In the last year there have been several staffing changes. The headteacher joined the school in January 2018. Around 40% of staff joined the school in the last year.
- The school is part of a company called Integrated Services Programme (ISP). ISP is part of the Partnership in Children's Services Group (PICS), which until 17 January 2019 was owned by Sovereign Capital Investments. On 17 January 2019, Sovereign Capital Investments sold PICS to Core Assets Group, Capvest Ltd. The Department for Education has been advised.
- The school uses no alternative providers.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in all classes. All observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher. The quality of pupils' work was scrutinised. Meetings were held with members of the newly formed governing body as well as a representative of the proprietors.
- Discussions were held with staff; additionally the inspector took account of the 22 responses from the Ofsted staff questionnaires.
- The inspector talked with a group of pupils to listen to their views about the school. The views of other pupils were gathered during lessons and lunchtimes. The inspector heard some pupils reading. The 10 responses to the pupil questionnaire were also considered.
- The inspector listened to the views of parents and carers about the school. She met with two parents at the start of the day and considered the six responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and four free-text messages.
- A wide range of documentation was examined, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and information relating to pupils' achievement and progress. Records relating to safeguarding, attendance and behaviour were also checked.

## Inspection team

Liz Bowes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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