

Inspection of ISP School

Castlewood Farm, Conyer Road, Teynham, Kent ME9 9EA

Inspection dates: 19 to 21 September 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Outstanding**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **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 are immensely proud of their school. They develop strong bonds with staff and feel listened to and well cared for. Those pupils who have been at the school for a longer period demonstrate excellent behaviour and attitudes, both in lessons and at social times. Staff have high expectations for pupils. Pupils learn well in lessons and show resilience. They use several strategies that staff have taught them when they feel anxious or unsettled. As a result, pupils recognise what triggers their anxiety and know what to do to calm themselves. Pupils get on well with each other and are generally respectful. Staff tackle problems swiftly. Consequently, pupils feel happy and safe.

Pupils' personal development is exceptional. Despite the significant barriers that pupils face, staff are relentless in providing opportunities for pupils that are no different to their peers in mainstream schools. An extensive range of trips and visits, alongside a well-thought-out personal development curriculum, prepares pupils very well for the future. Pupils who once struggled to see a positive future now have a much brighter outlook. By the time they leave school, pupils are ready to pursue their next steps, academically and also socially and emotionally.

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

This is a good school which has many strengths. A therapeutic approach is woven into the fabric of the school. Pupils benefit from the rural setting. Farm animals in the neighbouring fields and ample space help to create a sense of calm and tranquillity. The environment has a highly positive effect on pupils. The school dog is popular with pupils who need help to ease their anxiety.

Tellingly, pupils' behaviour, attitudes and attendance significantly improve during their time here. This is because staff have a deep understanding of pupils' needs. Staff, together with the therapy team, accurately identify the help that pupils need. They use appropriate strategies to support pupils.

Pupils study a broad range of subjects, including business studies, photography, Spanish and land-based studies. One pupil showed the lead inspector her photography portfolio with immense pride. The curriculum matches the ambition of the national curriculum. Each subject is well planned and carefully sequenced. However, in a very small number of curriculum areas, staff are not clear enough about the precise knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn.

In lessons, pupils listen well and enjoy the discussions they have with their peers. They think hard and give thoughtful answers to the questions staff ask of them. Teachers provide clear explanations and use examples so that pupils better understand the key content. However, there is some inconsistency in how well teachers use different approaches to support pupils' learning in class. Where possible, trips are organised to bring learning to life. For example, pupils visited The

Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury to watch Billionaire Boy as part of the English curriculum.

Transitions are very well managed. Strong initial checks processes help staff to identify pupils' individual needs when they first join the school. Staff carefully monitor how well pupils are learning the curriculum. This helps them to make decisions about the support that pupils need. Pupils receive valuable feedback from staff which helps them to improve their work.

Leaders place great importance on reading. A love of reading pervades the school. Several annual events help to raise its profile even further. Fiction, non-fiction and poetry books provide ample opportunities for pupils to read widely and often. A phonics programme supports those pupils who struggle to read. The school works in partnership with parents from the start to support pupils' education. As a result, pupils learn to read quickly. It was evident in several lessons that pupils are used to reading aloud in front of their peers and can read fluently and confidently.

The excellent personal, social and health education curriculum ensures that pupils develop independent living skills. Filling the gaps in pupils' personal development is important. For example, pupils learn to tie their shoelaces, manage their finances and brush their teeth. Importantly, they learn about relationships and sex education, different faiths and are prepared well for life in modern Britain. Charity work helps to instil the importance of helping others.

The careers education programme prepares pupils exceptionally well for the future. Most pupils complete work experience, either internally or externally. Staff support pupils effectively when applying for college or apprenticeships and often accompany them on visits to ensure a positive transition. Pupils leave with valuable qualifications such as functional skills, BTEC National Diploma or GCSEs that help them to pursue a range of career options.

Leaders, including governors, understand what is working well and what could improve. Staff like working here and are positive about their workload and well-being. The proprietor ensures that the school is supported to fulfil its statutory duties effectively, including compliance with section 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and meeting the independent school standards. Additional leadership capacity is helping to improve the quality of education. Despite this, the link between leaders' monitoring of the curriculum, how well they identify areas for improvement and staff training is not as strong as it could be.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- In a very small number of curriculum areas, leaders have not identified the essential content they intend pupils to learn with sufficient accuracy. This means that teachers do not always have a firm and common understanding of the intent and, consequently, pupils' learning is slowed. The school should identify precisely the key knowledge and skills they intend pupils to learn and remember in all subjects.
- There is still some variability in the quality of the curriculum's implementation. This means that pupils do not achieve as highly as they could across all areas of the curriculum. The school should ensure that the stronger pedagogy seen in some areas of the curriculum is consistent across all areas of the curriculum.
- The school's oversight of the curriculum is not as systematic as it could be. As a result, leaders are not consistently focusing on the areas of the curriculum that need the most improvement. The school should make sure that they identify the things that will make a difference to pupils' learning, including decision-making about staff professional development, and closely check the impact of their actions.

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	119015
DfE registration number	886/6065
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10267607
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	57
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Integrated Services Programme
Chair	Jo August
Headteacher	Carole Cox
Annual fees (day pupils)	£51,249.65
Telephone number	01795 523 900
Website	www.ispschools.org.uk
Email address	Carole.cox@ispschools.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 to 17 January 2019

Information about this school

- ISP School is a special school located in rural Kent. All pupils have an education, health and care plan and are placed by local authorities. The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties and/or autism spectrum disorder as their primary need.
- The school is currently registered for 64 pupils from seven years old to 18.
- Until recently, the school served both primary and secondary aged pupils. However, it now caters solely for secondary aged pupils.
- The school's last standard inspection took place in January 2019 when the overall effectiveness of the school was judged to be good, and all the independent school standards were found to be met. A material change inspection took place in October 2021 to increase the number of pupils from 42 up to 64. This inspection found that the independent school standards were likely to be met if the material change were implemented.
- 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.
- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings with the headteacher, other leaders, and staff at the school. The lead inspector also met with the director of education and the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and land-based studies. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View and the free-text comments received during the inspection. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.
- Inspectors gathered evidence about the independent school standards during meetings with leaders. Inspectors also considered other policies and documents

and toured the school's buildings and grounds with the headteacher and other leaders.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Shaun Jarvis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Caroline Clarke

Ofsted Inspector

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