

ISP School

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

Unique reference number (URN): 119015

Inspection report: 12 May 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.
- **Insufficient evidence:** Inspectors were unable to gather sufficient evidence to judge whether safeguarding standards are met.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils arrive at the school with very varied starting points. Many have experienced significant disruption in their education. They now enjoy coming to school and behave positively as a result of the school's work. This enables them to re-engage in learning, sometimes for the first time in many years. They make progress from their starting points academically, socially and emotionally. They develop the necessary knowledge and skills to progress to the next stage in their education.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils and the curriculum offer is broadening. Increasing numbers of pupils are successful in gaining qualifications in a range of GCSE and vocational subjects and functional skills. Typically, pupils achieve well from their starting points and are well prepared for adulthood and their next steps. However, some pupils make less progress than they could due to the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

A culture of learning and positive behaviour permeates the school. High expectations of attendance and behaviour are consistently shared by staff and pupils respond positively to these.

Attendance is promoted for all pupils. Leaders are clear that they want pupils in school as much as possible and attendance is celebrated. The school has clear processes it follows to support pupils to attend school more. Leaders have a detailed understanding of the barriers facing each individual pupil and the causes of poor attendance. They work with an individual focus to improve attendance. Many pupils have a history of non-attendance or very low attendance. For the majority of these pupils, attendance improves quickly and attendance for all pupils improves over time.

Strong relationships underpin the school's work. Pupils are polite and respectful to each other and staff. A culture of kindness, nurture and care pervades the school. The calm, purposeful environment supports pupils to learn. Pupils are well supported to manage their behaviours by staff who are well trained and understand and apply the school's behaviour management approach well. The culture ensures behaviours such as bullying or harassment rarely occur and are managed effectively if they do.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders are fully committed to ensuring pupils joining the school experience a positive, safe and happy environment. Leaders' highly inclusive approaches underpin the school's work.

Leaders identify pupils' needs quickly and clearly understand the barriers pupils face. They use education, health and care plans effectively when planning the curriculum so that learning closely matches pupils' needs. Clear systems help them monitor pupils' learning, personal development and welfare needs. Leaders review and refine the effectiveness of support for each pupil to respond to emerging issues.

Leaders provide staff with training and support, particularly in therapeutic approaches. Staff then apply these approaches to tailor strategies carefully and reduce barriers to learning. They know their pupils well. Leaders also work closely with other schools and external agencies to secure the resources that pupils need to succeed.

Leaders prioritise high-quality pastoral support. They monitor pupils closely and respond swiftly with appropriate support or adaptations to promote pupils' sense of wellbeing and safety. This enables pupils to be settled and ready to learn. Leaders select and use alternative provision carefully and appropriately. As a result, most pupils overcome barriers to learning and engage more successfully with school.

The school has a suitable accessibility plan that meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have ensured the personal development programme at the school is broad, coherently planned and carefully considered to meet pupils' needs. There is a well-designed and age-appropriate personal, social and health education programme, including relationships and sex education, that is available for all pupils. This programme generally builds pupils' knowledge and makes a positive difference to their development. Pupils know how to stay safe and healthy, online and offline. They learn about different faiths, beliefs and cultures. Pupils celebrate diversity and show tolerance and respect.

Leaders ensure that wider opportunities enrich pupils' learning. Local visits and excursions, including trips abroad, are available to all pupils. Leaders work to remove any barriers to pupils' participation so that all can benefit.

Pupils are taught to discuss their opinions and develop skills to listen to others. Clubs support development of talents and interests, often in response to pupil voice. Staff make sure every opportunity is provided to allow pupils to build confidence and resilience over time.

There is a planned and well-organised careers programme across the school. The comprehensive offer includes work experience, employer visits, college visits and careers guidance about the range of opportunities available. The school also hosts an annual careers fair. An enterprise qualification supports the careers programme and preparation for next steps. The school prepares pupils well for future education, employment or training.

Staff are vigilant in checking on pupils' wellbeing, resulting in additional bespoke and well-considered pastoral support when needed. High levels of care are deeply embedded and highly evident across all aspects of the school's work. Effective relationships with parents, wider professionals and external agencies strengthen the support provided directly by the school.

Needs attention

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

There are inconsistencies in the quality of the curriculum and teaching across the school. Leaders have identified what needs to improve but their actions have not yet had the positive impact intended. The curriculum is generally well planned and sequenced, but the quality of teaching in some subjects does not yet support pupils to secure the most important knowledge and skills they need.

Teachers do not consistently check pupils' understanding of the essential knowledge they need before moving on to new learning. In subjects where assessment is more fully developed, teachers use this to inform their teaching, adapt the curriculum and ensure gaps are identified and closed. Leaders have provided training for staff to improve the quality of teaching. However, this has had limited impact in making improvements, for example, in the development of teachers' subject knowledge in some areas of the curriculum.

Leaders recognise that many pupils arrive with significant gaps in the important knowledge they need for communication, reading, writing and mathematics. Planned interventions help pupils secure this knowledge. They are supported to close gaps more quickly in reading and phonics than in other areas.

Leaders have extended the curriculum and the range of qualifications pupils can achieve. This has been carefully considered to meet the needs and interests of individual pupils at the school.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

The proprietor has not ensured that the independent school standards are met consistently over time. There are systems and processes in place to support school improvement. However, an imprecise oversight of quality assurance has resulted in leaders lacking an accurate picture of the school's work, particularly in relation to the quality of curriculum and teaching.

Leaders have a broad understanding of the strengths of the school. Their actions are targeted on the right aspects of the school's work, but they have lacked precision. This has resulted in the school improving less quickly than it could, for example to ensure teaching becomes effective across the school.

The proprietor and leaders are ambitious for their pupils. They are committed to improving the school and make decisions in the best interest of the pupils. Pupils' personal development and welfare are given the highest priority. This helps to ensure that pupils receive the support that they need to successfully re-engage with their education and with all that the school offers.

Leaders provide a range of professional learning opportunities for staff. Leaders are collaborating with other schools within the proprietor body to develop the programme of training. The training and collaboration to develop subject knowledge and expertise of teachers is not focused enough to impact positively on the quality of teaching in the school.

Staff value the work of leaders and the support they are given. Staff report that leaders are always considerate of their wellbeing and workload. Staff understand the ambitions of leaders and share the same desire to do the very best for the pupils.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Many pupils benefit from strategies that address their individual barriers to learning. They make progress from their starting points, particularly in the subjects where the curriculum is taught most effectively. This enables most to access and achieve the broad range of qualifications that are available, reflecting the high ambitions that leaders and staff have for all pupils. However, for some pupils, the quality of the curriculum and teaching is less effective than it could be. This results in some pupils not progressing as well as they could.

Pupils enjoy attending school and quickly develop very positive relationships with staff. Pupils are valued and staff understand their wide-ranging needs. Pupils trust staff and know they will support them. Pupils know their voice matters and that staff will listen carefully to any concerns they have. This helps pupils feel happy and safe at school.

Pupils learn how to regulate their emotions and to manage challenging situations very effectively. This gives them some essential skills for adulthood. Staff know all the pupils very well. They respond quickly when pupils need additional support. Pupils behave respectfully and calmly around the school. In lessons they demonstrate that they are keen to learn. During social times they play happily. This contributes to a sense of purpose that pervades the school.

Attendance at the school is improving for most pupils. A well-considered and appropriate programme of personal development extends across the taught curriculum. In addition, all pupils have access to wider enrichment opportunities. The school works closely with parents and carers to provide well-considered and individualised support for each pupil's wellbeing. Encouraged by staff's ambition and care, pupils are helped to re-engage successfully with education and to be well prepared for their next steps.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers develop the necessary skills and expertise to deliver consistently effective learning across all subjects.
 - Leaders and the proprietor should develop a robust understanding of their roles and responsibilities, ensuring that precise and appropriate actions drive swift improvements across all areas of the school's work and ensure the independent school standards are met consistently.
 - Leaders should rigorously monitor the progress of all pupils and analyse data and information with precision to ensure their strategies to remove barriers to learning make a sustained difference to pupils' opportunities and experiences.
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About this inspection

Inspectors carried out this standard inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, and checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with school leaders, the chair of the proprietor body, members of the local governing body, including the chair and a selection of staff and pupils.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The chair of the proprietor body is Jo August.

The fees currently charged are £61,131 to £82,301.

The email address of the school is teynham@ispschools.org.uk

Pupils attending the school have a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, including social, emotional, and mental health difficulties, communication and interaction, cognition, and learning needs. All pupils at the school have an education, health and care plan.

The school currently makes use of one unregistered alternative provision.

Headteacher: Carole Cox

Independent school standards

Independent school standards are either met or not met for each category.

1. Quality of education provided

Standards not met

The following standards have not been met:

Paragraph 2(1)

The standard in this paragraph is met if—

- (a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and

Paragraph 3

The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–

- (c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
- (d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
- (e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
- (g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress;

2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils	Standards met
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All standards have been met.

3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils	Standards met
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All standards have been met.

4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors	Standards met
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All standards have been met.

5. Premises of and accommodation at schools	Standards met
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All standards have been met.

6. Provision of information	Standards met
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All standards have been met.

7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Standards met

All standards have been met.

8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Standards not met

The following standards have not been met:

Paragraph 34(1)

The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school—

- (a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
- (b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and

Lead inspector:

Simon Graydon, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Anne Allen, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This data was available to the inspector at the time of the inspection.

 This data is from 12 May 2026

Total pupils

62

School capacity

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

Insufficient evidence

Inspectors were unable to gather reliable enough evidence to grade an evaluation area. This is rare and normally only happens if there are no pupils on roll at the school.

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