

# Estuary High School

**Inspection date**

16 September 2025

**Overall outcome**

**The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection**

## Main inspection findings

### Part 1. Quality of education provided

*Paragraphs 3(a), 3(c), 3(e), 3(g)*

- These independent school standards (the standards) were not met at the time of the standard inspection in April 2025. In some areas, there was a lack of clarity in curriculum design. The curriculum did not help pupils to build successfully on their prior learning. Staff had variable subject knowledge and understanding of the curriculum. They did not address pupils' gaps in learning effectively. When pupils were absent, they did not get the support they required to catch up. As a result, they disengaged.
- The proprietor has redesigned the curriculum. It is now more coherent. The curriculum identifies in detail what pupils should learn and when. Pupils are often learning reasonably well. They draw on their prior knowledge. Pupils are engaged and eager to know more.
- The school has trained staff in how to deliver the curriculum as intended. Teachers now have sufficient subject knowledge. They plan lessons comprehensively. They explain and model new content well. Staff check carefully that pupils understand it. Pupils recall knowledge quickly. They display their understanding confidently in class discussion.
- Pupils' attendance is high. This means there is less need to catch up on learning missed through absence. However, the school has ensured there is a well-considered process for how this is to happen when required.
- The proprietor has ensured the above standards are now met.

*Paragraphs 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i) 3, 3(d)*

- At the previous inspection, staff did not know well enough how to adapt the curriculum for pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school did not provide staff with clear information to help them to do this.
- Pupils have typically experienced significant degrees of childhood trauma. The proprietor puts a high emphasis on meeting pupils' social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. This is so they are better able to learn. As a result, pupils settle and engage.

They have a clear plan for their next steps. The information the school provides to staff about pupils' needs is now relevant and focused.

- However, the school is still not meeting pupils' SEND successfully. Some staff are not knowledgeable enough about pupils' needs. This means teachers sometimes do not adapt the curriculum to meet pupils' SEND and starting points. At times, there is a 'one size fits all' approach to teaching. Pupils become frustrated that learning is not matched to their needs precisely enough. Some find it too challenging and others too easy. Pupils do not develop the depth of understanding they should.
- These standards are still not met. Therefore, some of the standards in part 1 remain unmet.

### Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

#### *Paragraph 7 to 7(b)*

- The previous inspection found safeguarding to be ineffective. The proprietor had insufficient oversight of safeguarding. The safeguarding policy and procedures were not correctly applied. The school showed a lack of vigilance. The proprietor had not ensured staff understood their responsibilities around keeping children safe. The school did not refer to appropriate agencies when pupils exhibited harmful or dangerous behaviour. The proprietor did not protect staff from harm and false allegations from pupils. The closed-circuit television (CCTV) had been switched off following a serious incident on site. This affected the proprietor's ability to gather all the needed information after incidents.
- The proprietor has reviewed its safeguarding policies and procedures. These are now clearer and applied more rigorously. Safeguarding leaders have the knowledge needed to keep pupils safe. They make the referrals they should following incidents or concerns. This includes to the local authority designated officer. The proprietor has ensured there is systematic oversight of safeguarding incidents and processes. The school routinely and carefully reviews safeguarding concerns.
- Staff have been thoroughly trained in how to apply the safeguarding policies and processes. Their knowledge of these is secure. Staff know how to spot and log concerns. There has been an increase of staff vigilance. The impact of the proprietor's improved safeguarding work is shown by a calm culture. Incidents that have been recorded are low level. There has been no use of restrictive physical intervention. This represents a safer experience for pupils.
- The proprietor has established clear procedures to protect staff from any false allegations. Risk assessments are clear and detailed so as to pre-empt such occurrences. The CCTV is always switched on.
- Pupils are taught to understand risk. There have been improvements in their behaviour and well-being. They meet regularly with designated members of staff. This helps pupils voice feelings and disclose concerns. They feel safe.

#### *Paragraph 9 and 9(b)*

- These standards were not met at the time of the previous inspection. Behaviour was found to require improvement. There was regular disruption to learning and inappropriate behaviour. Pupils' behaviour plans were not followed rigorously There was

a lack of oversight of incidents. This included bullying, racist incidents and the use of restrictive physical intervention.

- The school has established clear and high expectations for behaviour. Staff apply the policy and behaviour plans consistently. Pupils respond well to this. There is an orderly atmosphere. Pupils engage and take pride in learning. The number of incidents is low. This includes regarding racism and bullying.
- The proprietor has implemented robust means of checking on incidents. The school has a secure knowledge of how and why to use restrictive physical intervention. It aims to use this as a last resort. There have been no recent incidents involving restraint.

#### *Paragraphs 11, 16 to 16(b)*

- The previous inspection report explains that the school did not have a suitable approach to risk assessment. Risk assessments in use were generic. This meant that staff made decisions that put both themselves and pupils at risk, such as when travelling alone with pupils.
- The standard regarding health and safety was not met. This related in particular to the proprietor's failing to record and monitor staff accidents and injuries.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been no injuries to staff. However, the proprietor has ensured there are clear and robust processes should this be the case.
- There is a suitable health and safety policy. The proprietor ensures that checks on health and safety are regular and closely monitored.
- Risk assessment processes have been reviewed and tightened. Risk assessments are used routinely and carefully. They are regularly updated and reviewed, such as following incidents. Staff know and apply risk assessments for pupils. Risk assessments for activities and resources are detailed and well considered. This leads to a safer culture in the school.
- The proprietor has ensured the standards in this part are now met.

### Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

#### *Paragraph 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(2)*

- These standards were not met at the standard inspection in April 2025. This was because the medical room was in a space used for teaching.
- The proprietor has rectified this. The medical room is now in a discrete space.
- The site is an appropriate learning environment for the number of pupils.
- The proprietor has ensured the standards in this part are now met.

### Part 6. Provision of information

#### *Paragraph 31, 31(1)(h)*

- This standard was not met at the previous inspection. This was because the proprietor had not ensured that local authorities received the necessary information regarding provision for pupils who are looked after.



- The proprietor has ensured it now provides local authorities with the information it should. There is clear accounting of the expenditure for pupils funded by local authorities. This is sent to all relevant bodies.
- There is no school website. The proprietor makes sure that all the required information is available to parents and carers, and local authorities. All the policies needed to comply with the standards are appropriate and up to date.

*Paragraph 32(1)(c)*

- There is a suitable and detailed safeguarding policy. This has all the information it should, including local and internal safeguarding contact details. It closely follows statutory guidance regarding safeguarding. This standard was met at the time of the previous inspection. It remains met.
- The proprietor has ensured the standards in this part are now met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

*Paragraph 34(1) to 34(1)(b)*

- These standards were not met at the inspection in April 2025. The proprietor had not ensured it met all of the standards. There was a lack of sufficient oversight of key aspects of the school's work. The school did not check its own work well enough. There was limited capacity to improve the school.
- The proprietor has addressed many of the issues that the previous inspection report identified. The proprietor has now written an acceptable action plan. This has specific success criteria and appropriate timescales. Much of the proprietor's recent work has been focused on the implementation of this action plan. In several areas, this has been effective. Many of the standards that were not met at the previous inspection have now been met.
- The proprietor acknowledges that the level of support and challenge was not as robust as it should have been. There is now clearer oversight of the school's work. The proprietor has removed any crossover and confusion between the school's work and that of the larger organisation it is a part of. There has been added leadership capacity. This is in particular through the work of a school improvement partner, who has provided regular support. The school has put in place well-considered means of checking the quality of its own work. That said, the school knows that it has not monitored closely enough how well its work improves pupils' experience of learning.
- Staff have been trained successfully in most areas. School leaders have trained and modelled for staff how to raise the level of staff professionalism. Training has improved staff safeguarding knowledge. The school has established its values. These are embedded in the revised policies and processes. There are well-defined measures for how these are to be implemented and monitored.
- Many of these amended processes are new. Some of the standards in part 1 are still not met. Staff are not as confident as they should be in supporting pupils' SEND. The proprietor has, therefore, not ensured that all the standards are met.

*Paragraph 34(1)(c)*

- This standard was not met at the previous inspection. Safeguarding was ineffective. While staff were caring, there were concerning weaknesses in the processes intended to ensure support for pupils.
- The standards regarding safeguarding are now met. The school has a calm and safe culture. The school has significantly developed its systems to support pupils' welfare and well-being. This standard is now met.
- Some of the standards in part 8 remain unmet.

#### Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The accessibility plan meets the requirements of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The school does not meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection, as set out in the annex of this report. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

## School details

Unique reference number	134940
DfE registration number	882/6053
Inspection number	10414400

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 status	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	13 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	3
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Kites Children's Services Ltd
Chairs	Roz Parsons Andre Palmer
Headteacher	Mrs Doreen Ellis
Annual fees (day pupils)	£36,800 to £41,600
Telephone number	01702483999
Website	Not applicable
Email address	dee@estuaryhigh.com
Date of previous standard inspection	23 to 25 April 2025

## Information about this school

- Estuary High School is an independent special school for pupils with SEMH needs. Most pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school operates from 820 London Road, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 3NH.
- The school's current headteacher joined the school in September 2024.
- The school makes use of one unregistered alternative provision and online tutoring.
- Although the school is registered to have post-16 students, at the time of the inspection there were none on roll in this phase.

- The school uses local park amenities for physical education.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the Department for Education (DfE). The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- The school's most recent standard inspection was in April 2025. The school was judged inadequate. Safeguarding was deemed ineffective. Several standards were unmet. The DfE asked the school to submit an action plan. This was evaluated by Ofsted in July 2025. The action plan was deemed not acceptable.
- This is the school's first additional inspection to monitor progress. The inspection was conducted without notice.
- To check compliance with the independent school standards, the lead inspector met by phone with one of the chairs of the proprietor body. The lead inspector also spoke by phone to the service manager, who line manages the school's leadership. The inspectors met on site with the headteacher, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors looked at a range of curriculum documents. Inspectors considered the school's policies, including those for safeguarding, health and safety and risk assessment.
- Inspectors visited a number of lessons, talked to pupils about their experiences and looked at their books.
- Inspectors toured the site to check the medical room was compliant with the standards.

## Inspection team

Charlie Fordham, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sara Boyce	His Majesty's Inspector



## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

### **The school does not meet the following independent school standards**

#### **Part 1. Quality of education provided**

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
  - 2(1)(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
  - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work-
    - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan; and
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
  - 3(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;

#### **Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 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-
  - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
  - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and

### **The school now meets the following requirements of the independent school standards**

#### **Part 1. Quality of education provided**

- 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
- 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
- 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
- 3(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;

#### **Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-

- 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
- 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that-
  - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively; and
- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
  - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
  - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

## **Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- 24(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including-
  - 24(1)(a) accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils;
- 24(2) The accommodation provided under sub-paragraphs (1)(a) and (b) may be Used for other purposes (apart from teaching) provided it is always readily available to be used for the purposes set out in sub-paragraphs (1)(a) and (b).

## **Part 6. Provision of information**

- 32(1) The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that-
  - 32(1)(h) where a pupil wholly or partly funded by a local authority (except where funding is solely for free of charge early years provision in accordance with the duty contained in section 7 of the Childcare Act 2006[16]) is registered at the school, an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil is provided to the local authority and, on request, to the Secretary of State.

## **Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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