

Edstart

5 Gerald Road, Salford M6 6DW

Inspection dates

5–7 March 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and managers have continued to ensure that they provide a good education. This has led to continuous improvements in pupils' progress and attainment.
- Pupils make good progress in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Their attainment is rising year on year.
- Teaching is good. Teachers know and understand pupils' needs and plan lessons meticulously.
- Teachers assess pupils' achievement thoroughly and regularly. Pupils' starting points, including their reading skills, however, are not always accurately identified.
- Pupils' behaviour is managed very well. This is because teachers apply systems consistently and are skilled in de-escalating any problems.
- The well-conceived work to improve pupils' reading skills and increase their enjoyment of reading is at the early stages of implementation.
- The school develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well. Pupils have a wide range of extra-curricular activities to enrich their education.
- While reducing absence and lateness of a small number of pupils remains a challenge, especially at one centre, leaders have worked successfully with a number of pupils and their families to improve attendance.
- A strength of the school is its pastoral care and support. Pupils consistently praise teachers for helping them to improve, both academically and in their behaviour. The school's work to improve pupils' mental health is developing but is currently stronger in some centres than others.
- Most pupils leave with qualifications which enable them to pursue meaningful post-16 training, education and employment. The guidance they receive, however, is not consistently strong or coordinated in all four centres.
- The proprietor and leaders ensure that the independent school standards are fully met.
- The governors are skilled, experienced and committed to the values, aims and ethos of the school. They have made astute recruitment decisions to strengthen leadership since the last inspection. Governors ensure that pupils are kept safe.

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?

- Further improve leadership and management to ensure that the provision in all the school's centres is as good as the best by:
 - embedding a strong mental health programme
 - strengthening the careers information, advice and guidance
 - continuing to work on improving pupils' reading skills and attitudes to reading.
- Develop consistent and effective systems to establish pupils' skills and knowledge when they join the school.
- Strengthen strategies to increase pupils' punctuality and attendance, so they are equally high in all centres.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have remained true to their aims and ethos. They have extended provision since the last inspection but not compromised on their high expectations and standards. As a result, most pupils make good progress and improve their behaviour.
- Leaders have an honest and acute understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are ambitious, and despite their achievements to date, continue to aspire to be better.
- Leaders and governors have ensured that staff recruited to teach and support the pupils share their vision and provide a safe, nurturing environment so pupils can deal with their difficulties and achieve qualifications.
- Leaders have devised a curriculum which is, at its core, academic but also interesting and creative. The range of courses includes subjects such as English, mathematics, science and religious education, as well as art and design. Pupils' interests and life skills are enhanced well through a range of activities, such as cooking, rock climbing, citizenship, work and sport.
- The leadership of teaching is strong. The quality of teaching is consistently good across all four sites. The quality assurance leader provides teachers with valuable feedback and support to strengthen their practice. They regularly receive appropriate training and development.
- Leaders track pupils' performance closely. Termly progress meetings identify pupils who are off track and careful plans are devised to help them improve. Individual learning plans are updated by teachers to monitor pupils' academic progress, attitudes and behaviour.
- Pupils' behaviour is tracked and monitored very well. Leaders use their analysis of trends to strengthen the support they provide for pupils and to hone teachers' skills. The policies to improve pupils' behaviour are consistently applied.
- The leadership of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is strong. The new leader has, in a short period of time, sharpened up the coordination of support for these pupils across the four centres, and strengthened the partnerships with the referring schools and authorities.
- Leaders prepare pupils for life in modern society through regular personal, social, health and economic education lessons (PSHE). During these sessions, pupils discuss topical issues, such as identity, prejudice and British values. Citizenship lessons are effective in enhancing pupils' understanding of their rights and responsibilities.
- The school's work to engage parents and carers is effective and more work is planned to further strengthen this. The reports parents receive are detailed, especially about their children's social, emotional and behavioural progress. Testimonials from parents praise staff for the way in which they support and care for their children, and for giving pupils life chances they might not otherwise have had.
- Pupils' health and safety is a priority. The centre managers devise detailed risk assessments for the buildings and for any trips out of school.

- The school's work to support pupils' career aspirations is improving overall and is already strong in some centres. Most pupils leave to take up places in employment, training or education. A few have taken up apprenticeship placements. However, the quality of the independent advice and guidance provided for all pupils, at both key stages, is not as consistently strong as it could be in all centres. A small number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 have received only some guidance about the range of pathways available to them when they leave school.
- School leaders have not rested on their laurels since the last inspection. They have constantly sought out good practice and external verification of what they do. They maintain excellent relationships with Manchester Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and engage well with local subject and other alternative provision networks.
- The proprietors, leaders and managers know and understand well the requirements of the independent school standards and ensure that they are fully met.

Governance

- The school has suitable governance structures, and the governing body provides effective challenge and support for its aims and ambitions. The members of the governing body are skilled and knowledgeable professionals. As such, they bring considerable expertise to the leadership of the school.
- Governors monitor the school's work through regular and focused meetings. They provide support where necessary and undertake training regularly.
- The recent successful recruitment of key senior leaders is testament to the governing body's good judgement and expertise.
- The chair of the governing body's considerable experience in safeguarding has further strengthened safeguarding arrangements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Designated safeguarding leaders at each site are trained well and carry out their duties extremely diligently. The systems to report safeguarding concerns are used well by staff and any follow-up monitoring is carried out in a timely way. All staff receive updated training, including 'Prevent' training.
- Safeguarding leaders have developed strong links with referral agencies and professionals. Comprehensive support is provided for pupils and their families when there is a concern raised.
- The curriculum supports safeguarding well. Pupils are taught how to keep safe, including online, and how to report their worries or concerns both in school and out.
- All pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they felt safe and well cared for, and this was confirmed by the outcomes of the school's own pupil surveys.
- The safeguarding policy is available for parents upon request.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is consistently good in all centres. This is because staff receive good-quality training to help them develop their skills and knowledge.
- A significant strength in teaching is the positive, respectful relationships between teachers and pupils. Pupils trust their teachers and this means they are not afraid to make mistakes or ask questions. This helps them to learn and retain knowledge. Behaviour is managed extremely well.
- Teachers plan lessons meticulously and they use a range of resources to engage pupils. They also draw on pupils' own experience to generate interest.
- Teachers plan for the range of abilities to good effect. Pupils are provided with appropriate work and the most able are regularly given challenging questions to make them think more deeply.
- Teachers help pupils to understand the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the world around them well. Citizenship lessons encourage pupils to understand the rule of law and to respect the police, while religious education helps them to appreciate faiths that make up modern Britain, such as Islam. In so doing, teachers prepare them well for life beyond school.
- Teachers regularly challenge derogatory and prejudicial language. Pupils receive mentoring to help them understand the effects of their words when they breach the school rules. Teachers use PSHE lessons to good effect to tackle issues of stereotypes, homophobia and racism.
- Teaching assistants work seamlessly with the main teachers. They support pupils effectively because they understand individual needs and they are familiar with the expectations of the curriculum.
- Pupils' basic skills are taught well, although the teaching of reading, especially to those whose reading skills are very low, is stronger in some centres than others. The coordinator of the provision for pupils with SEND is developing a more consistent strategy across the school.
- Teachers understand the key stage 4 examination assessment systems well. They set targets for pupils, and complete the individual learning plans regularly which identify pupils' next steps for progress. Their understanding of pupils' starting points, including the detail of the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding, is often variable. This is mainly because of the quality of information they receive from the referring school but also because the systems to test pupils' attainment when they join the school are not always wholly reliable. Leaders have committed to seeking new more reliable methods to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding so they make progress more quickly.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.

- Pupils consistently report that they feel safe and cared for well. They trust the adults and respond to their guidance. Teachers model the behaviour they wish to encourage and pupils respond, for example saying please and thank you, and being kind. A typical testimonial from a parent said, 'My son attending Edstart is one of the best things that has happened; he feels safe and understood.'
- Pupils have regular opportunities to enrich their school experience. Thursdays are reward days for good behaviour and Tuesday afternoon is for activities, including sport and recreation. Pupils says they particularly enjoy the trampolining park, rock climbing, ice skating and laser quest.
- Pupils are encouraged to be active and be physically fit. Access to a local gym and leisure centre facilities are provided for pupils and used well.
- Pupils are provided with motivational role models to help them to make the right decisions in life. Guest speakers have addressed pupils about issues such as gangs and extremism.
- Pupils are taught well how to keep safe. They know and understand the risks of playing online games and using social media. Pupils are taught well how to recognise the signs of healthy and unhealthy relationships. During a session about domestic abuse, pupils spoke maturely about the issues and discussed the impact of abuse on the victims and their families.
- The school is investing more and more in strategies to support pupils' mental health. In one centre, pupils participate in yoga and mindfulness sessions. Some centres have regular visits from professionals from the child and adolescent mental health services. However, the quality of provision is not equally strong across all the centres.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Teachers are trained well to support the range of pupils' emotional and behavioural needs. As a result, there are few serious incidents and pupils re-engage quickly when minor incidents do occur. Reflection time is used effectively with pupils to minimise repeated misbehaviour.
- There are few bullying and prejudice-based behaviour incidents. Respect and tolerance are reinforced daily by all staff. Pupils' use of respectful language is rewarded. All classroom behaviour, both positive and negative, is recorded on pupils' behaviour scorecards. Pupils are encouraged to behave well through target-setting and rewards.
- Pupils' attendance is improving overall. The school has been successful with many pupils whose attendance previously had been poor. Some pupils now have 100% attendance. At one centre, however, a few pupils' absence and lateness remain too high. Leaders are investigating further strategies to work with families and pupils to improve attendance and punctuality.
- The rates of exclusions are very low. Pupils at risk of exclusion receive effective support which has, for the majority, led to improved behaviour and engagement.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' attainment across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, is improving year on year. In 2018, 100% of pupils received a grade for English and 98% for mathematics. For the vast majority, this represents a significant achievement compared to the forecasts from their previous settings.
- Reliable tracking information about pupils' progress suggests that most pupils make good progress in skills and knowledge from one assessment to another in most subjects. Where there is underperformance, pupils receive effective targeted support. Most pupils achieve the targets set for them by the school.
- Pupils acquire new knowledge and skills in science well. Pupils demonstrate good recall of key terms and facts. They undertake investigations in a range of topics in biology, which help to develop their scientific skills effectively.
- Pupils arrive at the school with low academic starting points. This is because they have often not attended school regularly due to a range of issues, usually related to their behaviour. Most pupils make good progress, especially in mathematics, English and science. Those who do not make strong progress are often hampered by weak reading and writing skills. The specific gaps in their knowledge and skills are not well known by staff when they start at the school. This sometimes hinders their progress at the beginning.
- Only a few pupils in the school have an assessed reading age when they start at the school. This poses difficulties for teachers to pitch their lessons appropriately at the beginning of some pupils' time in the school. Pupils' reading skills are variable. For most, they are at a low level. Although leaders are working hard to address this, a reading culture is not fully embedded across all centres.
- A high proportion of pupils leave the school with qualifications which enable them to undertake meaningful post-16 courses or pathways. A small number of pupils undertake work experience as part of the provision at Edstart. Very few leave school not pursuing education, employment or training (NEET). Although effective overall, the quality of independent careers information, advice and guidance for pupils currently on offer across the four centres varies, despite regular work-skills lessons. As a result, a small proportion of pupils are less clear about the available options for their future after school.

School details

Unique reference number	137275
DfE registration number	355/6059
Inspection number	10067909

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 School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	13 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	87
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietors	James Lowe and Chris Irwin
Chair	Karen Vereckyen
Headteacher	James Lowe
Annual fees (day pupils)	£11,500
Telephone number	01617 364 087
Website	www.edstartschools.com
Email address	james@edstart.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 March 2016

Information about this school

- EdStart is an independent day school which provides alternative provision for pupils aged between 13 and 16.
- The headteacher is also a director of EdStart and co-proprietor of the school.
- At the time of the inspection, there were 87 pupils on roll. There are no disabled pupils. The school provides full-time education for pupils who have previously had significant difficulties with their behaviour in school and were at risk of permanent exclusion.
- Nearly all pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), mainly related to social, emotional and mental health issues.

- Twelve pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.
- The school's main site is located in Salford, where there are 25 pupils on roll. There are three additional sites: one in Wythenshawe, on the outskirts of Manchester, with provision for 20 Year 10 and 11 pupils with 24 on roll; one in Bolton for 15 Year 9 to 11 pupils with 15 currently on roll; and one in Bury for 20 Year 9 to 11 pupils with 20 currently on roll. No pupils travel between sites.
- The school does not use alternative providers.
- The school works closely with Manchester PRU and is part of its alternative provision network.
- The school aims to 'offer a secure and structured environment promoting positive behaviour where disaffected and permanently excluded young people develop as confident and independent learners... target social and emotional and behavioural skills and educational progress in order that young people achieve their full potential'.

Information about this inspection

- Provision was observed and the site was inspected at each of the school's four sites. The inspectors observed pupils' learning and scrutinised samples of pupils' work in different subjects.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and leaders responsible for behaviour management, the curriculum and the provision for pupils with SEND. Inspectors held discussions with all the centre managers. Pupils at each site were interviewed.
- School documents were examined in order to check compliance with the independent school standards. These included the school's policies and information about pupils' progress and the curriculum. Records relating to welfare, health, safety, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance were also checked. The school's website was under construction at the time of the inspection.
- There were not enough responses to the online Parent View questionnaire for these to be analysed. Parents were invited to speak with the inspector but none took up the offer. There were no responses to staff or pupils' surveys. The inspector also took account of the school's own surveys and testimonials.

Inspection team

Zarina Connolly, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Linda Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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