

Inspired Directions School

34–38 Dalston Lane, London E8 3AZ

Inspection dates

5–7 June 2018

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

- The headteacher, supported by governors and the proprietor, is relentless in his pursuit of transforming pupils' lives. When pupils arrive, they receive a fresh start, having experienced major difficulties in their previous education.
- Leadership promotes a strong team ethos within the school. The school's values of 'individuality, collectivism and progression' underpin all aspects of the school's work.
- Governance is effective. Governors ensure that pupils have sufficient resources and opportunities to develop both personally and academically.
- Leaders have taken effective action to ensure that the independent standards are met.
- The curriculum has some exciting aspects, including an insight into the world of work and music. It inspires pupils to learn as it caters for their needs.
- The school's culture promotes pupils' personal development and welfare well. Pupils form positive relationships with staff and through this they are able to express their concerns, should the need arise.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good. Creative teaching promotes positive attitudes in pupils so that they make gains in their learning.
- Pupils' outcomes are good because teachers encourage pupils to achieve. Pupils develop skills which support the next phase of their education, training or employment.
- The management and procedures to promote good behaviour across the school are strong. Once at the school, the behaviour of most pupils improves.
- Over time, the attendance of most pupils rises. Despite the school's work, the attendance of a few pupils who are persistently absent is too low.
- The assessment across all subject areas varies, including ascertaining pupils' prior learning. Leaders check pupils' progress regularly in some subjects, including in English and mathematics, but less so within some of the enterprise projects.

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 the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - assessment procedures verify pupils' prior learning and cover all subjects, including enterprise projects
 - teachers use pupils' assessment information so that teaching strategies take into account pupils' current progress to deepen pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Evaluate the impact of actions to reduce persistent absence rates of pupils so that they improve to be at least in line with the national average.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, together with the proprietor and governors, aspire for pupils to improve their life chances. Leaders help pupils to close gaps in their learning caused by disruptions in their previous education.
- Leaders have established an ethos where the school's values of 'individuality, collectivism and progression' are at the heart of the school's work. Leaders give pupils the best chances to enjoy their education and prepare for life after Inspired Directions School.
- Despite a few changes since the previous inspection, including the school locating to different premises, leaders have sustained an ambitious culture. The school is an integral part of the Inspire charity, which contributes to the rising profile of pupils' outcomes.
- The proprietor works closely with the headteacher. Together with governors, they have ensured that all independent standards and other requirements are met.
- Leaders and the proprietor promote improvements effectively, including developing staff. Courses and other events on offer through the local pupil referral unit and the local authority also support staff training. Leaders share good practice and utilise strong staff skills to improve aspects of the school's work effectively, for example through the development of staff to managerial positions.
- Morale among staff is high. This was confirmed by discussions with staff and scrutiny of their responses to the Ofsted's inspection survey. Most staff feel proud to work at the school because of the school's values and the support that they receive.
- The curriculum, with a suitable emphasis on English, mathematics, music and sports, inspires pupils to learn. Enterprise projects provide interesting opportunities for pupils to gain an insight into the world of work, such as in construction, gardening, film and catering. These projects integrate subjects such as science and technology and help to develop pupils' employability skills.
- The innovative curriculum caters for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well and prepares pupils for life in modern Britain. Trips and carefully selected texts develop pupils' respect for other beliefs and pay particular regard to the protected characteristics, such as age, gender and disability. For instance, pupils take part in wheelchair basketball and make visits to a local care home for the elderly.
- Effective partnerships exist with parents. The school gives parents termly reports about how well their child is doing in relation to the standards expected. Staff work closely with parents, including providing effective support to prepare their child for interviews.
- On very rare occasions, a very small number of pupils above 16 years of age attend the school because of lack of suitable provision in the area. When doing so the school does not exceed its capacity of 30 pupils.

Governance

- Governors share the school's vision and fulfil their roles successfully. They use their expertise to support and challenge school leaders and ensure that pupils have opportunities to reach their potential.

- Governors support the enrichment of the curriculum, which includes work-related opportunities and a music studio. Governors, along with staff, contribute to the behaviour policy for supporting pupils. This has led to a positive impact on pupils' behaviour in this school.
- Governors have an accurate understanding of pupils' needs and ensure that funding supports pupils' needs. The governing body is well informed about the school's performance, and the achievements of pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors have ensured that a rigorous focus to promote the welfare of pupils exists in this school.
- The safeguarding policy, published on the school's website, reflects the current government requirements. Risk assessments, such as for trips, ensure that plans are in place to minimise any possible issues. Records show that pre-employment checks ensure that staff are suitable to work with children.
- Safeguarding training enables staff to know the steps to follow should a pupil be at risk of harm, including that associated with child sexual exploitation. Staff receive up-to-date information to refresh their knowledge on child protection issues, including radicalisation and extremism.
- Positive relationships enable pupils to express any concerns they might have. Pupils say that they feel safe at the school because their teachers care for them. Partnership work with parents and records of referrals made to external agencies ensure that vulnerable pupils receive the help they need.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Most pupils enter the school with a less than positive attitude towards learning. Teachers and other adults work hard, with high expectations to ensure that learning is a key feature of the pupils' time at the school.
- Teachers' planning is creative with a degree of flexibility, which gains pupils' interest and involves them in their learning tasks. Sometimes pupils ask meaningful questions not related to the learning aims, but teachers use this to raise pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils benefit from a strong team ethos among teaching staff. The school's values to promote individuality, collectivism and progression underpin this. Staff encourage pupils to try their best, so that they can develop and acquire new skills.
- Pupils receive appropriate opportunities to develop their reading, writing and communication skills. As part of the careers guidance that pupils receive, pupils learn how to communicate at interviews. Pupils explore different forms of texts, including poetry, and use this knowledge to write their own poems. A group of pupils described the school in a poem as, 'a school for education where all the teachers show dedication'.

- The teaching of mathematics is effective. Teachers use their subject knowledge to ensure that tasks are challenging. Pupils' work shows development of mathematical skills over time.
- Pupils enjoy their learning in music and enterprise projects. These subject areas enthuse and encourage pupils to learn. Enterprise projects promote the learning in subjects such as science, technology, drama and art.
- The quality of assessment varies across subjects. Assessment procedures support pupils' learning in English and mathematics. However, the current progress of pupils in enterprise projects is not clear, because of limited assessment information. In some subjects, teachers are unable to use pupils' prior learning information to boost their knowledge, understanding and skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The resilience and caring attitudes of staff foster trusting and positive relationships with pupils. This helps to build pupils' confidence and self-esteem as they overcome previous obstacles in their learning. The acknowledgement of pupils' success in music and other activities helps pupils to rediscover the benefits and joy of learning.
- The school strongly supports pupils' physical and emotional needs. The effective use of therapeutic services, including speech and language therapy, mentoring and counselling, improves pupils' well-being. Both pupils and parents appreciate the care and help, which pupils whose circumstances might put them at risk receive.
- Pupils learn to be safe, including the risks associated with gang activity, through the curriculum, visiting speakers and other events. Pupils know the different forms that bullying can take and how to recognise and avoid the risk online. A captivating video performed by pupils on how to use social media responsibly illustrated this.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The management of behaviour is effective. Many pupils experienced behavioural difficulties before attending this school. Despite this, pupils generally conduct themselves well around this school and in lessons. Pupils show enthusiasm towards many activities, including playing table tennis and football and expressing themselves through music.
- Support and nurturing for pupils is very effective and supports a warm and friendly environment. Occasionally, pupils' concentration levels dwindle, but staff address any disruption effectively to ensure that pupils make the most of their learning time.
- The newly introduced behaviour policy is consistently applied. Pupils receive rewards for their achievements, which promote pupils' learning and improve behaviour. Comments of praise on pupils' reports, the reduced number of behaviour incidents and bullying logs confirm this.

- Even though overall attendance is low, most pupils' individual attendance improves over time, particularly when compared to their previous school. Close working relationships with parents and external agencies enable many pupils to attend school regularly. The school's records show that the persistent absence rates of a few pupils are too high, despite the school's work to follow up pupils' absences.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils join the school with gaps in their knowledge because of time lost from education. Good teaching over time leads to most pupils making good progress, across most subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make equally good progress across most subjects of the curriculum. A scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's information confirms this.
- Pupils' outcomes improve from the time they join the school to when they leave. Pupils have the opportunity to achieve a qualification in functional skills. In 2017, all Year 11 pupils achieved at least one qualification in either English and/or mathematics.
- Pupils make good gains in developing personal skills. Pupils learn to self-regulate in situations that may cause them anxiety. Similarly, pupils develop the confidence to succeed at interviews because of the support they receive.
- Music is very popular and helps pupils to become more disciplined in their learning while developing creative talents. As a result, a few pupils have secured places at college for courses in music and the arts.
- The school prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education, training or employment, given pupils' starting points. Pupils gain appropriate experience in vocational studies, which prepares pupils for the world of work. This has resulted in some pupils securing apprenticeships, traineeships and employment in gardening, catering and in the production of films.
- In 2017, the majority of pupils moved successfully onto further education courses. Similarly, most Year 11 pupils currently have offers for college placements, including in health and social care and football.

School details

Unique reference number	141029
DfE registration number	204/6009
Inspection number	10048722

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	13 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	24
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	New Hackney EBP (Inspire!)
Chair	Emma West
Headteacher	Joel McIlven
Annual fees (day pupils)	£16,500 to £23,000
Telephone number	020 7275 6060
Website	www.inspire-ebp.org.uk
Email address	info@inspire-ebp.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–12 June 2015

Information about this school

- Inspired Directions School is an independent, alternative provision providing an education for pupils who are unable to access mainstream education. The school was established by the Inspire charity, an education business partnership, in June 2014.
- Pupils are referred from pupil referral units from the London Boroughs of Hackney and Islington.
- The school receives light-touch support from the local authority (London Borough of Hackney).

- The majority of pupils are disadvantaged and almost half of pupils on roll have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- Fundamental to the school's ethos are the values of individuality, collectivism and progression.
- The school is registered to cater for pupils between the ages of 13 and 16 years. On very rare occasions, a very small number of pupils above 16 years of age attend the school because of lack of suitable provision in the area.
- The school's previous inspection was a full inspection that took place on 10–12 June 2015.
- There have been a number of changes since the previous inspection. The current headteacher has been in post since July 2016. The school's capacity has changed from eight pupils to 30 pupils and the school moved into its current premises in March 2017.
- The school does not use alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils' learning and viewed pupils' work across a wide range of subjects.
- A range of evidence was collected to check compliance with the independent standards, including scrutinising safeguarding procedures, the school's policies and the school's assessment information.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the proprietor (director of Inspire), members from the governing body, a senior leader from the local pupil referral unit, teachers and pupils.
- Telephone conversations were held with a member of the governing body, a local authority representative and parents to hear their views of the school. There were no responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire.
- The inspector spoke formally to a group of teachers and considered the nine responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Rosemarie McCarthy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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