

Inspection of Edstart

EdStart Specialist Education, 5 Gerald Road, Salford M6 6DW

Inspection dates: 20 to 22 June 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

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 feel comfortable and safe at EdStart. They said it is a happy place where they can have a fresh start. Leaders have created an accepting and friendly school where pupils trust the staff. This is because staff help pupils to overcome the difficulties that they experienced before they joined the school. Pupils know that staff care about them and want them to do well.

Leaders are highly ambitious for pupils. They are determined to ensure that pupils, including those who have experienced difficulties in their education previously, participate fully in all that the school has to offer and learn well. Pupils who stay at the school until the end of Year 11, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), gain the qualifications that they need to move on to further education or training.

Pupils know that leaders have high expectations of their behaviour. They benefit from building trusting relationships with staff. Most pupils can regulate their emotions when something unsettles them. They learn to respect each other and the adults who help them. Pupils quickly develop the behaviours and attributes that they need to be successful at school and in the future. When bullying occurs, leaders deal with it well.

Leaders are determined that pupils have as many opportunities as possible to experience the world outside school. Pupils enjoy a broad range of activities such as visits to trampoline parks, horse husbandry and visits to restaurants. Leaders carefully plan trips and visits that help to support the development of pupils' social, communication and employability skills.

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

The proprietor and leaders have a clear vision for the quality of education that pupils should receive. This vision is clearly understood by staff and pupils across the five sites from which the school operates. Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum that meets the requirements of the independent school standards. They have identified the essential knowledge and skills that they want pupils to learn. The curriculum is organised well and offers a strong foundation for pupils' learning. Leaders have also ensured that the curriculum supports pupils' social, emotional and behavioural development. The curriculum prepares pupils for adulthood and to be positive members of society.

In the main, teachers have the subject-specialist knowledge that they need to deliver the curriculum well. The curriculum is broken down into small steps that are carefully matched to the needs of each pupil. This helps pupils to build up their knowledge and skills as they move through the school. Those pupils spoken with during the inspection were able to recall previous learning accurately. For example, some older pupils were very clear about Macbeth's motivations and downfall when

discussing their study of Shakespeare. Other pupils could strongly relate their knowledge of cellular structures when considering animal cells in biology.

Many pupils have significant gaps in their learning as a result of their disrupted education prior to joining the school. Leaders swiftly assess pupils' starting points and identify any gaps in learning effectively. Teachers' frequent and effective checks on pupils' learning mean that misconceptions are addressed quickly. Most pupils achieve qualifications which support them in taking the next steps in education, employment or training.

Since the last inspection, leaders have taken effective steps to promote reading. For example, each of the school sites has dedicated reading areas stocked with thoughtfully selected, high-quality books for pupils to borrow. Pupils regularly read newspapers during form time. When pupils join the school, leaders assess their reading knowledge. However, leaders' systems to identify and support pupils who are weaker readers do not identify the precise deficits in pupils' reading or phonic knowledge. This means that some pupils do not receive the additional reading support that they need to catch up with their peers.

Leaders' systems for identifying the needs of pupils with SEND are effective. This includes recognising where there are unidentified needs and acting swiftly to put plans and actions in place. Pupils, including those with an education, health and care plan (EHC plan), receive support that is matched precisely to their individual needs. Parents and carers recognise the difference that this knowledge and support makes. They said that clear communication with leaders, compassionate staff and nurturing classrooms are helping their children to 'focus, achieve and follow their ambitions'.

Pupils know that teachers believe in them. They appreciate the clear rules for behaviour that leaders provide. Staff use a consistent, calm and positive approach to managing behaviour. They support pupils who find self-control more difficult. This helps to minimise disruption in lessons. Leaders are focused on improving pupils' attendance. However, there is a small number of pupils who do not attend school often enough. This hinders their progress through the curriculum and their access to all that the school has to offer.

Leaders place pupils' wider personal development at the centre of the school's work. They provide a broad range of enrichment activities that help pupils to foster new interests and skills. Leaders have made sure that all pupils access suitable learning about relationships and sex education in line with the Department for Education's statutory guidance. They have designed a personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum that addresses relationships and sex education and health education in an age-appropriate way.

Pupils learn about potential risks linked to online activity, drug misuse, knife crime, gangs and county lines. They also find out about different faiths and cultures. They develop an understanding of the importance of equality, tolerance and respect. Pupils access an extensive programme of careers education. They value the experience that they gain from meeting with employers, college and apprenticeship

providers. Pupils are well supported to make choices that will suit them best.

The proprietor, together with governors, ensures that leaders are held to account and that statutory obligations are met. They provide leaders with the necessary support and challenge. The proprietor ensures that each of the independent school standards are consistently met.

Leaders have ensured that the school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Staff appreciate leaders' efforts to look after their well-being and workload. They told inspectors that leaders listen to what they have to say and take into account their needs, including their work–life balance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that there is an effective safeguarding policy. The policy is published on the school's website and follows the latest government guidance.

Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff receive regular training and are alert to the local risks that pupils may face. They report concerns about pupils immediately.

Leaders ensure that there is a designated safeguarding lead on site at each of the five EdStart schools at all times. Leaders are adept at working with a wide range of external agencies. They are persistent in seeking the right support for vulnerable pupils and their families.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves and others safe, including when they are online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders' systems to identify and support pupils who are weaker readers do not identify the precise deficits in pupils' reading or phonic knowledge. This means that some pupils do not receive the specific reading support that they need to catch up quickly with their peers. Leaders should ensure that teachers are equipped to provide appropriate support so that these pupils learn to read fluently and accurately.
- A small number of pupils do not attend school regularly enough. This hinders their progress through the curriculum and their access to the full range of opportunities that the school offers. Leaders should ensure that recent improvements are built on so that these pupils attend school regularly, and on

time, so that they can fully benefit from all that school provides and achieve well.

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	137275
DfE registration number	355/6059
Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	10267655
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	158
Number of part-time pupils	11
Proprietor	James Lowe
Chair of Governors	Kathryn Verycken
Headteacher	Kevin Buchanan
Annual fees (day pupils)	£16,000 to £56,000
Telephone number	0161 736 4087
Website	www.edstartschools.com
Email address	admin@edstartschools.com
Date of previous inspection	5 to 7 March 2019

Information about this school

- The school currently operates over five sites across the Greater Manchester area. These sites are situated at 130 Sale Road, Northern Moor, Manchester, M23 0BX; 5 Gerald Road, Salford, M6 6DW; Castle Hill Youth Centre, Castleton Street, Bolton, BL2 2JW; 13-15 Broad Street, Bury, BL9 0DA; and 11 Church Lane, Oldham, OL1 3AW.
- Many pupils who attend this school have an EHC plan. This includes for social, emotional and mental health needs and autism.
- The school has exceeded the maximum number of pupils on roll that it is registered to admit. The school is registered to admit 135 pupils. There are currently 158 pupils on roll.
- Leaders use five registered alternative provisions for a very small number of pupils.

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.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors spoke with the proprietor, the chair of governors and the headteacher. They also spoke with other senior leaders, subject leaders and a representative of a local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, science and PSHE. They talked to leaders and staff about their curriculums. They also talked to pupils about what they knew and remembered in these subjects. They looked at pupils' work and visited lessons. The lead inspector also evaluated the curriculum in all other subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding policy, along with other policies and documentation related to pupils' welfare and their education. They talked with staff and pupils about safeguarding, pupils' personal development and pupils' behaviour and attitudes. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors carried out a tour of the school premises at each of the registered school sites to check for compliance against the relevant standards.

- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, as well as for Ofsted's online pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Kate Bowker, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Gil Bourgade

Ofsted Inspector

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