

Inspection of The Davenport School

The Lodge, Foxborough Hill, Eastry, Sandwich, Kent CT13 0NY

Inspection dates: 8 to 10 July 2025

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
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Personal development	Outstanding
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

This is a happy school where friendships count. Pupils feel safe here. They are proud of their work and happy to share it with visitors. Staff set a high bar for pupils' academic success and for their behaviour. Pupils know this and respond positively, even when their anxieties are high and self-confidence is in short supply. Behaviour is not perfect here, but most of the time it is truly impeccable.

Developing pupils' self-esteem and sense of self-worth underpins everything the school does. This impacts very positively on pupils' attitudes to learning and on their broader development. Pupils are keen to get into classrooms in the morning to learn new things and to share their opinions. Because of this positive approach and the resolute determination of staff, pupils' achievements and progress through the curriculum are impressive.

Parents and carers are positive about the school. Some reported that the school has had a life-changing impact on their children. This is because their children are developing trusting relationships and thriving here. Importantly, pupils understand that respect for others is a value worth having. They also know that having high ambitions for themselves is equally important.

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

This is a good school that is improving at pace. Firm foundations have been reinforced since the last inspection. Leaders at all levels have energy and vision and are moving the school forward in all areas. Staff are positive about how the school is led and managed.

Those in positions of governance know the school well. They understand their roles in ensuring that the quality of provision is as good as it can be. The impact of the work of the proprietor body is very apparent in the school's ethos, as well as in the physical environment. Statutory duties including compliance with the independent school standards are understood and met. Aspects such as those required by the Equality Act 2010 are also fully in place.

The school's curriculum is bespoke and continues to evolve. Much of it is very personalised to meet the needs of individual pupils. Staff are mostly very successful at assessing and meeting the evolving needs of pupils, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This means that when pupils are successfully reintegrating back into education, no time is lost, and pupils make a rapid start to learning. This supports pupils to attend well. Pupils thrive in school and make accelerated progress across the curriculum.

Reading has a high profile. The programme to support pupils' early reading development is comprehensive. Most aspects are having a positive impact on pupils' ability to read. However, expectations of what some can achieve is not high enough. This is because staff do not recognise quickly enough the very rapid progress some

pupils make. This is especially the case with most-able readers who are ready to 'fly' and would benefit from additional challenge.

The school's mathematics programme is also well established. Pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons. Their books are full of well-presented work. However, a key aspect of working as mathematicians is being overlooked. Opportunities for pupils to reason are not as well developed as they could be. Important chances for them to explain their thinking in arriving at an answer are being missed.

The schools work to promote pupils' personal development is a clear strength. It underpins all aspects of school life. The school sees this element as crucial in its efforts to build pupils' resilience, while ensuring they become caring, compassionate citizens. Relationships education and understanding difference is part of the formalised personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Pupils have a growing understanding of the importance of a healthy diet and exercise. Beach art, fossil hunting and litter picking add to pupils' knowledge of the natural world beyond the school gates.

The school's wider curriculum has been well thought through. Parents are impressed with the opportunities it brings for their children. Pupils enjoy learning because much of what they are taught is closely tailored to their interests and passions. Opportunities for them to develop their own unique talents are plentiful. During the inspection, some pupils attended an athletics event at a local secondary school. Designing Japanese water gardens or composing a school rap all feature in day-to-day life here. Importantly, pupils themselves are encouraged to see themselves as 'experts', when that is clearly the case.

Pupils themselves contribute greatly to the life of the school. A discussion during the inspection revealed that one of the main requirements for new house captains will be kindness, not bossiness. Though acknowledging that sometimes arguments do happen, pupils get on well with each other in their work and their play.

The school's facilities provide a nurturing environment for pupils. A new outdoor learning area has recently been completed. A new meeting room is planned. Aspects such as health and safety and the recruitment of suitable staff are given appropriate importance by the proprietor body. Interestingly, pupils themselves find it hard to offer examples when asked to share one thing that could be better at their school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and the proprietor)

- Sometimes staff do not design learning that challenges pupils enough in phonics lessons. This means that pupils are at risk of disengaging from learning and opportunities to develop pupils' reading skills are lost. The school needs to ensure

that all pupils benefit from lessons that develop their reading and comprehension skills, particularly pupils who are more-able readers.

- Pupils do not get enough opportunity to reason as mathematicians. They do not benefit from chances to explain, question and consolidate their understanding of mathematical concepts and processes in their work. This means that their progress through the mathematics curriculum is not as strong as it might be. The school needs to provide opportunities for pupils to explain their reasoning. This will help them to gain better understanding of the way they arrive at right and wrong answers in their mathematics work.

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	133298
DfE registration number	886/6089
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10374997
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent School
Age range of pupils	5 to 12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	19
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Ethelbert Children's Services
Chair	Gordon Shaw
Headteacher	Susan Howson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£36,720 to £46,800
Telephone number	01304 621 836
Website	www.ethelbertonline.co.uk/education/the-davenport-school/
Email address	natalie.turner@ethelbert.net
Date of previous inspection	1 to 3 November 2022

Information about this school

- This is an independent special school which caters for pupils from the age of five to 12 years. The school is one of two schools within Ethelbert Children's Services.
- The school provides for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs. Most have an education, health and care plan.
- The previous standard inspection took place in November 2022.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.

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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings with leaders at all levels, as well as teaching and support staff. The lead inspector met with the chair of the proprietor body.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone to officers from two different local authorities that have links to the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, physical education and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects with leaders.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of parents, leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors talked to pupils throughout the inspection to gain their views about the school. The lead inspector also talked formally to a group of pupils on day three of the inspection.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted through Ofsted Parent View. The views of staff were also considered through Ofsted's survey.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

Anne Allen

His Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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