

Employability Solutions Independent School

52 Wellington Street, Liverpool, Merseyside L19 2LX

Inspection dates

4–6 December 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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school curriculum meets the requirements of the independent school standards. It is well designed to meet the needs of pupils currently attending the school. Consequently, pupils make good progress from their starting points. However, it provides a more limited range of opportunities for most-able pupils to attain higher-level qualifications.
- The conduct of pupils is commendable. They are welcoming and eager to share their positive experiences about the school. Most pupils make considerable improvements in their attendance after starting the school. However, there is a small number of pupils who do not attend as frequently as they should.
- The personal development of pupils is a strength of the school. Pupils know how to keep safe and healthy because of the quality of the teaching that they receive. Strong emphasis is placed on ensuring that pupils understand the risks posed by gang and knife culture, and that they have access to appropriate avenues to raise safely any concerns that they may have. However, the opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills are limited.
- The proprietors and leaders share a vision with staff that is rooted in providing pupils with a high-quality education to enhance their employability skills and ensure their positive contribution to British society.
- Leaders have ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, drawing on their professional experiences in industry.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and provide sequences of learning activities that suitably challenge and engage pupils in their learning. However, on occasions, particularly in vocational subjects, the content of teaching resources is sometimes too hard for less-able readers to access.
- Safeguarding and pastoral care are excellent. Pupils are protected and well supported by a vigilant and caring staff, who have their interests at heart. Staff frequently act as advocates for pupils. Staff routinely go the extra mile to help families so that pupils can overcome their often considerable barriers to learning.

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 leadership and management of the school by enhancing the school's curriculum to provide greater opportunities for the most able pupils to attain more advanced accredited qualifications.
- Enhance the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring the accessibility of teaching resources for less-able readers, particularly in vocational subjects.
- Improve pupils' personal development and behaviour by:
 - further improving pupils' attendance, particularly for those who are routinely absent
 - extending the opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The proprietor and leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The proprietor and leaders share a clear vision that is rooted in the ethos of the proprietary community enterprise from which the school has developed. This is to promote the future well-being and contribution to society that pupils from the school make by providing them with a high-quality education that increases their knowledge and skills, and enhances their employability skills.
- Leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses well because of their systematic and frequent checks on its performance. This is particularly the case in relation to the impact of their actions to meet the needs of individual pupils. Although the school has been open a relatively short time, this is clearly exemplified in the detailed case studies that the headteacher keeps up to date for each pupil. Leaders use this knowledge effectively to identify appropriate priorities for further development. However, it is too soon to see the impact of their actions.
- Leaders ensure that they meet the requirement to provide information for parents, carers and others, including local authorities placing pupils in the school. This includes the publication of appropriate information, required by the standards, on the school's website. Although the school has only been open for a short period of time, appropriate systems and procedures are in place to ensure that parents receive detailed annual reports of their children's attainment, progress and personal development. Additionally, the school is well prepared to positively contribute to the review of pupils' education, health and care plans. Leaders keep parents, dual-registered schools and local authorities well informed about pupils' academic and emotional progress through frequent contact with placement officers, partner schools and pupils' parents.
- The feedback from the local authority officers who work with pupils attending the school and parents affirms the positive impact that the school now has on pupils' emotional well-being and academic progress. This is exemplified in such comments as: 'This school never gives up on a child' and 'Leaders ensure that they carefully match their provision to individual pupils' needs.'
- This is a caring school that effectively promotes equality and British values. Leaders develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well through a range of activities. They make good use of the cultural and economic diversity found within the city to expand pupils' experiences and understanding. This includes visits to a range of places of worship, museums and pupils' involvement in community ventures such as Christmas food parcels and community regeneration activities. Pupils also host visits from their partner school in Huddersfield, which allows them to share and learn from each other's differing contexts and experiences.
- Teachers' continuing professional development is effective and valued by staff. Training is closely linked to the priorities for the school. It ensures that teachers and tutors are knowledgeable about their subjects and the schemes of work that they currently teach. Training for other members of staff is well considered and carefully chosen to enhance their knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities. For example, the

development of knowledge and skills in school business management and in pupil counselling is effective.

- Overall, the school provides pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the requirements of the standards. The curriculum is carefully designed to promote most pupils' academic, social and emotional achievement, including literacy and numeracy, and meets the needs of those currently attending the school well. Although the curriculum is fit for purpose, it does not provide ample opportunity for the most able pupils to attain higher qualifications. Leaders are well attuned to pupils' needs and have identified that this is a key priority for future development. However, it is too soon to see the impact of their actions.
- Pupils participate in a range of on-site and off-site physical education activities, including attending a local gymnasium, boxing and Capoeira (an Afro-Brazilian martial art that combines elements of dance, acrobatics and music). These activities develop pupils' social skills, alongside promoting their physical development. Leaders have ensured that pupils have access to suitable changing and showering facilities on the school site.
- The school does not receive any additional pupil premium or special educational needs funding from the local authority, or from schools placing pupils in the school.
- Although the school is registered for sixth-form education, no pupils in this age range are currently on roll. A small number of students, who are registered at another college, attend the school's site to follow appropriate vocational training courses. Leaders ensure that appropriate safeguarding and health and safety practices are in place to protect them and the school's own pupils during their time at the school.
- Leaders keep up-to-date records and logs of events within the school, including those that record incidents of serious behaviour. These logs record incidents, and their outcomes, in detail. Senior leaders and the proprietors regularly and effectively evaluate these incidents to identify any emerging trends or reasons for their occurrence.

Governance

- The governance of the school is undertaken by the directors of the proprietary company and is effective. It has ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The proprietary company has a clear and effective accountability structure in place to ensure that the school's leaders are closely held to account for the impact of their work.
- Knowledgeable and skilled directors, some of whom work as members of the school's leadership team, frequently receive detailed information about the school's performance and regularly check that it is accurate. Consequently, directors demonstrate a deep understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, its context and the barriers to learning faced by its pupils. They have high expectations and a share a passionate commitment to providing the best education possible for the pupils.
- The school does not currently have a governing body.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and the proprietary company have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are

of a high quality, and that they are fit for purpose and are followed meticulously. Leaders ensure that the statutory checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils are completed before they commence work in the school.

- Leaders' actions ensure that the school is a safe environment in which pupils can learn. Carefully controlled site access ensures that pupils remain safe during their time in school. Well-established procedures ensure that their property, for example mobile phones, are kept safe when they are handed in at the start of each day.
- Staff have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding procedures because of the frequent training that they receive. They are highly vigilant about the potential risks that pupils may face, including those posed by criminal gangs and extremist viewpoints. Staff share any concerns effectively and appropriately. Leaders share information with parents and appropriate authorities effectively to ensure that pupils' safety. They frequently 'go the extra mile' to support families in challenging circumstances and routinely act as pupils' advocates. As a result, parents have high regard for the school, exemplified by one parent's comment, 'This school never gives up on a young person.'
- The proprietary company has ensured that the school's safeguarding policy pays due regard to the most up-to-date guidance from the Secretary of State, and has ensured that this is published on the school website. Appropriate monitoring and filtering arrangements are in place for the school's internet connection and pupils' use of computer technology.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have good subject knowledge, particularly in vocational subjects, due to their professional experiences and expertise. As a result, teachers frequently bring activities to life and engage pupils in their learning with relevant references to real-life situations that exemplify the knowledge and skills being taught. For example, teachers are able to explain why construction students should not paint wooden ladders because it may cover fundamental safety issues such as cracks or damage to the ladder's frame or rungs.
- Teachers have high expectations of their pupils. Typically, teachers use their assessment of pupils to plan carefully activities that are appropriately challenging, and that systematically build on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding. Pupils routinely follow well-crafted individualised learning plans to ensure that they make swift progress in their learning.
- Teachers routinely make effective use of links between subjects to consolidate and develop pupils' knowledge and skills. For example, pupils studying fractions in mathematics consolidated their learning by applying their knowledge in practical sessions in food technology to create Christmas pastries. Teachers use current and up-to-date resources to help support pupils' learning. However, on some occasions the level of reading and understanding that is required of pupils to access the industry-standard information booklets is too difficult for less-able readers. When this happens it sometimes limits pupils' progress.
- The teaching of mathematics is of high quality. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge well to develop systematically pupils' knowledge and understanding across a wide range of mathematical topics. Teachers make good use of links to everyday situations to consolidate pupils' learning and allow them to practise their skills in solving

problems. For example, pupils are able to partition different fruits to match specified proportions when making healthy kebabs.

- Reading and writing are taught effectively across the school. Pupils have access to a small library containing a range of fiction and non-fiction books which are closely matched to their abilities and interests. Additionally, leaders capitalise on pupils' interests to engage them in reading by providing a range of magazines relating to vocational studies and their outside interests. As a result, pupils typically read effectively and apply well these skills to access a range of learning because of the good-quality of teaching that they receive.
- The work in pupils' books shows that teachers systematically plan sequences of activities to develop pupils' knowledge and skills, and that they provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to consolidate and apply these, often using practical sessions to further extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of the theory that is taught.
- All teaching is firmly rooted in the ethos of the school, which is to support pupils to overcome the barriers to their learning produced by their considerable social and emotional needs. Teachers and teaching assistants do this well. As a result, pupils prosper in an atmosphere of mutual respect and grow in confidence and improve their self-esteem.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Nearly all pupils succeed in overcoming the considerable barriers to learning they face that often relate to their emotional and mental well-being. This is because of the high-quality support and guidance they receive from the caring and committed staff. As a result, pupils re-engage in learning and make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils value the excellent relationship they have with staff and recognise that staff have their interests at heart. Pupils routinely told inspectors about the positive impact that the school and its staff had had on their lives. This is exemplified in comments from pupils, such as, '[members of staff]... often act as a second mother to me and help me to get on and learn' and 'This is the best school. Staff listen and help you.'
- Pupils value the good-quality information and guidance they receive about their future career choices. This advice is presented in an impartial manner by a number of suitably qualified and experienced members of staff. It is supplemented by external careers consultants, who visit the school to meet with pupils. Additional visits to careers fairs, employment events and well-established links with local colleges and businesses ensure that pupils receive enough information to make informed choices about their next steps in education and employment. All pupils have access, where appropriate, to carefully chosen work experiences that are closely linked to pupils' own interests and take account of their abilities, skills and knowledge.
- Pupils are prepared well for their place in society by the school's well-considered and effective programme of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) that promotes British values effectively. Pupils hold strong, positive views regarding the right to individuality and equality because of the high-quality and sensitive teaching they

receive. This included work around a rainbow-unicorn theme associated with the Liverpool Pride festival. As a result, they articulately explained how they believe no one should suffer discrimination because of the way they look, their race, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity.

- Pupils are routinely given opportunities to participate positively in the local community. These include working on developing and regenerating areas of waste ground as part of their construction studies. Additionally, some pupils routinely support the provision of a 'board and bake' after-school club for children in the local community with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and their parents. However, opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills and to take more ownership in leading their own learning in school are at an early stage of development.
- Pupils know how to keep safe in school and in the community because of the high-quality teaching that they receive. The school is a leading participant in a local initiative to educate young people about the dangers of gang-related activities and knife crime. As a result, pupils are knowledgeable about the risks of predation from criminals and the dangers of carrying weapons. Pupils have a secure understanding of how to keep safe while using technology because online safety is an intrinsic part of the school's curriculum.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' conduct around the school is commendable. Pupils show respect and tolerance for each other and for staff and visitors. For example, pupils welcomed the inspector into their lessons and were eager to share with him the positive impact of the school on the development of their well-being and learning.
- Pupils swiftly develop their self-regulation skills relating to their behaviour because of the excellent guidance and support they receive. As a result, pupils can identify when they are becoming stressed or when they are about to be overwhelmed, and which might result in inappropriate behaviour. As a result, they take appropriate actions to excuse themselves for short periods to restore their emotional equilibrium before returning to their learning.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and understand that bullying can take many forms. Pupils who spoke with the inspector found it difficult to recollect or identify any acts of bullying. They were, however, confident that, if it did occur, staff would do all they could to prevent it from continuing.
- Nearly all pupils join the school with considerable gaps in their education or prolonged absences from school that are often due to exclusion. The overwhelming majority make rapid and considerable improvement to their rates of attendance. This is because of the effective actions of leaders to provide a range of support strategies that build pupils' trust and remotivate them to engage in learning. Typically, absences occur for genuine reasons, such as illness or an emotional crisis. However, there is a small group of pupils whose parents have not engaged with the school and who remain stubbornly absent. Leaders take appropriate actions to challenge these families and encourage them to get their children to attend school frequently and on time.
- Exclusions are rare in the school. The number of exclusions has dropped considerably

from the start of term when pupils were new and getting used to the expectations of staff. Exclusion is only used by leaders as a last resort and for appropriate reasons. Leaders ensure that pupils returning from exclusions receive appropriate support to swiftly catch up with their learning and explore the reasons for the school's action so that it does not reoccur.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- All pupils attending the school are disadvantaged by their social, emotional and mental health needs. They commonly enter the school with considerable gaps in their knowledge and understanding, and with levels of attainment well below those expected for their age. No pupils have yet completed a full year in the school, but, in the short time they have been attending, they have made good progress from their starting points, particularly in establishing a positive work ethic and developing their literacy and mathematical skills.
- Pupils make good academic progress from their starting points because of the quality of teaching they receive. Work in pupils' work files and books shows that since September they have increased their confidence in writing. A project on letter writing led to pupils developing increasing complexity in their grammatical structures and the technical layout of complaint and celebration letters to imaginary businesses. Pupils have developed their resilience to feedback and used the advice well in most cases to amend and improve their writing. Over time, they are becoming more confident in writing longer pieces of work.
- Similarly, in mathematics pupils have developed their basic calculation skills well. They demonstrate increased understanding of topics such as fractions because of the effective teaching that they receive. Pupils' work in books shows that over time they have become more confident and are now able to successfully attempt more complex calculations, including multi-step problems that allow them to successfully complete functional skills-level work.
- Pupils enjoy their chosen vocational pathways and demonstrate in their work in books and in observed practical sessions that they are developing their knowledge and skills well. For example, pupils studying hair and beauty have a secure theoretical understanding of the health and safety risks within a salon. They then put this practical knowledge to good use to work safely and with confidence on a real client's hair within the school's professionally-equipped salon.
- No pupil has completed any externally-accredited qualification in the school because it is too soon after the school opened for them to complete the courses. However, pupils are successfully following nationally-accredited qualifications in English, mathematics and in a range of vocational studies, including construction, hair and beauty, hospitality and catering, alongside other curriculum subjects that include humanities and PSHE. However, currently, no pupils are following higher-level qualifications such as GCSEs in these subjects.
- The school's major success is the impact it has on promoting the positive outcomes for pupils' behaviour, engagement in education and attitudes to learning. This ensures that pupils are prepared well to continue their learning in a college of further education, the school's sixth form or the world of work. Pupils enter the school with a high level of disaffection with education and often present highly-challenging behaviour. In the short time that the school has been open, it has aided pupils to develop emotional stability and

a love of learning that is reflected in their commendable conduct and academic progress, culminating in them becoming engaged learners who positively contribute to society.

School details

Unique reference number	145463
DfE registration number	341/6013
Inspection number	10056436

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	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	17
Number of part-time pupils	3
Proprietor	Claire Cook
Headteacher	Gayle Worswick
Annual fees (day pupils)	£9,500
Telephone number	0151 427 4193
Website	www.employabilitysolutions.com
Email address	admin@employabilitysolutions.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This was the first inspection of Employability Solutions. It was first registered by the Department for Education in May 2018 and opened as a school in September 2018.
- The school is located in a refurbished building in south Liverpool. It began operation in 2016 as a social enterprise alternative provision for pupils in education in the locality.
- The school provides education for pupils aged 14 to 19 who are at risk of 'falling away' from education. There are no sixth-form pupils on roll at the school. However, some sixth-form pupils registered at another local college attend the school site to follow vocational programmes provided by the proprietary company.
- Nearly all pupils are dual-registered with both Employability Solutions and their mainstream home school. A very small number of pupils have education, health and care

plans.

- Places are secured through a referral process involving different agencies, including schools and Liverpool local authority. Pupils come from mainstream schools in Liverpool and the surrounding area.
- The school does not use any other alternative providers of education.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted with one day's notice to the school.
- The inspector observed learning throughout the school, checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards and looked at samples of pupils' work across a range of subjects. The inspector spoke with pupils about their work and school life.
- The inspector held meetings with leaders and directors of the proprietary company, teachers and other adults working in the school. The inspector met with and held telephone conversations with officers of the local authority, who have placed children in the school.
- The inspector scrutinised an extensive range of school documentation, including policies, planning, documentation relating to the leadership and management of the school and information about the progress, behaviour and attendance of pupils in the school. He scrutinised the school's records and systems to check the suitability of adults to work in the school.
- There were no responses to the online parent questionnaire, Parent View. The inspector considered the information from a meeting and telephone conversations with parents.
- There were no responses to the online staff and pupils' questionnaires.
- The inspector made a thorough tour of the school.

Inspection team

John Nixon, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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