

Inspection of Earlscliffe (Sussex Summer Schools Ltd)

29 Shorncliffe Road, Folkestone, Kent CT20 2NB

Inspection dates: 26–28 November 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Academic success and personal development are at the heart of what the school does. The school's ambitious vision to provide students with 'the best academic preparation' is pursued with purpose. Students are highly motivated and determined to achieve their individual goals.

Most students are sixth-form students following A-level and business diploma courses. Students achieve well in these examinations. As a result, they typically go on to their chosen universities, to follow courses in a range of subjects. These subjects include accountancy, architecture, business management and hospitality.

Students are very polite and courteous in lessons. They are determined to succeed. Students mix well, and relationships are harmonious. Students' welfare and safety are a high priority. Students feel safe and valued. They say that bullying is very rare, and they know who to speak to if they have any concerns.

Students achieve well in external examinations. They benefit from the care and support provided by their teachers. Their education is enriched through a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Students attend, for example, formal dinners, musical concerts, book festivals and trips to London and Oxford.

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

The headteacher has a very good understanding of what makes a good curriculum. He says the curriculum is designed to teach students how to think and understand. He says it is not designed to coach students for examinations. Recently introduced courses support critical thinking and students' better understanding of British values.

The curriculum is planned and designed to build upon prior knowledge. Schemes of work are helpfully hierarchical and developmental. Teachers and leaders use assessment to sequence content helpfully. Across all subjects, there is a good focus on subject specific words, to develop students' expertise.

Teaching reflects teachers' very good subject knowledge. Topics are suitably revisited to ensure that knowledge is retained. Teachers' regular assessment provides feedback to students and supports their long-term memory. Teachers have received helpful training in how the memory works and how students learn.

The recent appointment of middle leaders is benefiting the curriculum. Training is assisting middle leaders to better understand their curriculum responsibilities. Regular meetings with senior staff are used to discuss the curriculum and share good practice. These discussions have supported improvements in all subjects and most evidently in mathematics and the arts, for example. Improvements in science are evident but are still being developed.

Staff say that their welfare and well-being are considered. They say that senior staff are very supportive and always available. One member of staff commented that Earlscliffe was 'a very supportive and motivational environment for both staff and pupils'.

The school has no students registered with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, leaders have identified several students needing additional support. Such students' needs are very well known by staff. As a result, these students receive appropriate support in the classroom and achieve well.

The curriculum fully supports students' personal, social and health education (PSHE). Opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development are highlighted and pursued. However, the coordination of PSHE and SMSC is not as rigorous as it could be. This means that these areas of pupils' learning can be more coherently planned and coordinated.

In lessons, students are attentive, polite and well behaved. They support one another and enjoy positive relationships with their teachers. Students told inspectors that they enjoy coming to the school and they are motivated to learn more and succeed. Students' engagement in some tutorial periods was not so positive.

Students know about bullying. They can identify different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying. Rare instances of bullying are quickly addressed. Attendance rates are similar to national averages and students are punctual to school and to lessons. Fixed-term and permanent exclusions are similar to national averages.

Students achieve well. External examination results are high. In the 2019 A-level examinations, approximately one third of students achieved grades A to A* and two thirds achieved grades B to A*. Their performance in the sciences is not as high as in other subjects. Students are successful in getting into their preferred universities.

Students are very well supported with their university applications. Careers education has a full and detailed programme. Careers counselling is highly individual, with frequent one-to-one meetings between students and counsellors. Work experience is linked to career choices. The programme is well supported by visiting speakers.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and governors take their responsibilities very seriously. Governors make regular checks on safeguarding to ensure that procedures are effective. The safeguarding policy is clear and underpinned by current legislation.

Designated leaders are appropriately trained. All staff have received sufficient training and regular updates. They know how to recognise the signs of abuse and

neglect. The school carefully checks the suitability of adults working or visiting the school. Students know how to keep themselves safe. Safeguarding is a high priority.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The school's curriculum is well planned. The extent to which these plans are put into practice varies within and between departments. For example, in mathematics and the arts, the curriculum is well considered, suitably sequenced and thoughtfully developed. In science, the curriculum requires further work to embed progression, to ensure pupils achieve at least as well as they do in other subjects.
- Leaders provide a rich programme covering PSHE and SMSC. This is offered through assemblies, tutorials, enrichment and the Sports, Culture and Service (SCS) programme. Elements are also covered through the extra-curricular provision. However, the coordination of PSHE and SMSC is not as rigorous as it could be. Leaders should ensure that provision is better coordinated, to ensure students' personal development is well supported.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	138405
DfE registration number	886/6138
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10124215
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent boarding school
Age range of pupils	14 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	112
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Dukes Education Group Ltd
Chair	Aatif Hassan
Headteacher	James Harding
Annual fees (day pupils)	£23,130
Telephone number	01303 253951
Website	https://sixthform.earlscliffe.co.uk
Email address	admissions@earlscliffe.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	16–18 May 2017

Information about this school

- The school has recently been taken over by Dukes Education. Dukes Education operates several schools across London, Cambridge, Kent and Cardiff.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2019. He is mentored by the director, who was previously the headteacher of the school.
- The school attracts students from across the world, including China, Germany, Romania, Italy, Russia, Japan, Kazakhstan and the United Kingdom.
- The school offers GCSE, AS and A2 level courses as well as courses in English and business.

Information about this inspection

We 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.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, biology and art. We visited lessons and talked to students, looked at books and held discussions with subject teachers.
- We met with senior and subject leaders. The lead inspector spoke to three governors. We scrutinised the recruitment checks that the school makes on adults. We looked at records of the actions they have taken to protect students.
- We spoke to students to check how safe they felt and whether they know how to keep themselves safe. We walked around the school to check on attendance, punctuality and behaviour. We held informal discussions with students.
- We looked at schemes of work as well as information about attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.
- We took account of 40 responses from the online pupil survey and 27 responses to the online staff survey. There were 15 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and some additional comments offered by parents.

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Gerard Strong

Ofsted Inspector

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