

School inspection report

30 September to 2 October 2025

Clarity Independent School

Bridge Farm Barn

Woodhill Road

Sandon

Essex

CM2 7SG

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. The proprietor provides effective support and challenge for senior and subject leaders and holds leaders across the school to account for the school's performance. The leadership team and staff share the school's values and vision and are effective in developing pupils towards their potential. There is a culture of high expectations for both pupils and staff, who respond well to the expectations placed on them. The school's website includes most of the information required for parents. However, when the inspection commenced, not all previous inspection reports since 2015 were available on the school's website. Leaders rectified this during the inspection.
2. Leaders work with external professionals in an open and reflective way. All staff at the school are aware of the potential additional risks faced by pupils, whether due to their own actions or the inherent potential risks in society that can affect pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school has a suitable risk assessment policy and ensures appropriate action is taken to reduce risks identified for pupils, particularly those related to online safety.
3. Teaching effectively targets the needs of individual pupils. It is characterised by thorough planning, secure subject knowledge, appropriate expectations tailored to each individual pupil and effective questioning. Staff provide pupils with appropriate therapy, which is central to the pupils' progress, and this supports pupils to be able to access the curriculum. Pupils' increased skills in communication and numeracy have a positive impact on their achievement across all areas of their learning.
4. Staff employ a wide range of approaches to successfully challenge and elicit responses from pupils. Learning progresses at an appropriate pace for each pupil due to the effective support provided by adults. However, some staff do not use the school's detailed pupil assessment information as effectively as possible to ensure pupils make appropriate progress in the weekly planned tasks and activities.
5. Behaviour management for pupils who have social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs alongside Autism is effective. Key features include teaching pupils about self-control and forgiveness of others, encouraging them to take responsibility for their behaviours and find solutions for any disagreements or misunderstandings. Staff ensure that any relationship issues are often resolved before the pupils leave for home.
6. Pupils develop a mutual respect for each other, their teachers and for other staff and visitors. Staff promote positive values, such as patience, kindness, celebrating others' successes, humility and looking out for others' wellbeing. Teaching and support staff set a nurturing tone and context for positive behaviour within the school. They create and maintain an environment which enables pupils to feel secure, valued and able to voice their perspectives.
7. The school's safeguarding arrangements are effective and reflect current statutory guidance. All adults working with pupils are subject to all the required pre-employment checks. The safeguarding team responds appropriately should any safeguarding concerns be raised.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

The proprietor should:

- ensure that all staff use assessment information to plan pupils' progress as effectively as possible
- ensure that all previous inspection reports are consistently available on the school's website.

Material change request

8. Inspectors considered the school's request to assess the school's proposal to increase its total pupil capacity from 13 to 18.
9. The school premises and accommodation consists of three classrooms, a large playground, two communal areas, and therapy rooms and medical facilities for use with pupils. The classrooms are sufficiently sized to accommodate six pupils for teaching and learning. One of these is currently populated with three pupils.
10. Leaders have ensured that the school's health and safety and fire safety policies and procedures are suitable to account for the increase in pupil numbers, including implementing recommendations from external audits. Risk assessments are reviewed regularly, and appropriate action is taken as needed to mitigate risk. The school has conducted an effective risk assessment to determine how the proposed increase in numbers will impact its facilities. Leaders have implemented a suitable policy for supervising pupils and there are sufficient numbers of staff to account for the increase in pupil numbers. All staff are subject to the required pre-employment checks.
11. The arrangements outlined above are likely to meet the needs of the proposed increase in the number of pupils should the material change be implemented.
12. It is recommended that the requested material change be approved.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. The proprietor ensures that leaders have appropriate knowledge and skills to fulfil their responsibility towards the wellbeing of pupils who have SEMH or Autism. They ensure that the school meets the Standards. Leaders are aware that many of the pupils have previously had negative experiences with the education system. As a result, leaders make a concerted effort to work with parents and carers to ensure that the pupils' experiences feel much more positive than some of their previous ones and that home and school work together to support pupils in a consistent manner.
14. The school maintains effective links with external agencies and advisors, including local authority officers. Leaders utilise their advice and support to remain well informed about ideas of best practice with regard to the teaching, safeguarding and supporting the health and safety of pupils who have education, health and care plans (EHC plans).
15. Comprehensive systems and processes for assessing pupils' needs and providing them with appropriate support are in place. A wide range of specialist staff, including speech and language and occupational therapists, are directly employed by the school. Additionally, leaders carry out risk assessments for pupils at potential risk of harm and in key areas and activities, including trips and educational visits. Each pupil in the school has a personal risk assessment profile, and all risk assessments for activities involving pupils take these into account. Leaders update risk assessments frequently to reflect adjustments to how they support pupils to behave.
16. The proprietor and senior leaders carry out effective self-evaluation. They ensure that staff understand and promote the school's aims and ethos and that staff performance is evaluated and developed to promote the best outcomes for the pupils. They provide staff with guidance and support to undertake their roles effectively, enabling them to meet the needs of pupils. Leaders maintain a thorough overview of how effectively the teaching and resources are used to drive the school's priorities forward.
17. The proprietor ensures that most required information is provided to parents, including information about the school's policies, aims and ethos. The school's website has a hyperlink to the previous inspection report. However, other inspection reports since 2015 were not available to parents. Leaders rectified this before the end of the inspection. The school communicates regularly with parents about their child's daily or weekly progress and provides reports to parents about their own child's progress and achievement at least annually. Leaders provide the local authority with the necessary information relating to pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan), including details related to funding and finance.
18. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders implement a comprehensive accessibility plan that is regularly reviewed. Accessibility audits lead to actions to improve accessibility for pupils. Leaders and staff hold weekly meetings to consider and decide on curriculum modifications or other reasonable adjustments, such as rearranging desks to reduce glare for pupils or utilising specific chairs when engaging pupils in outdoor learning. The promotion of equal opportunities is well embedded in all aspects of the school's work. Leaders do not tolerate discrimination of any sort.

19. The complaints policy is available to parents, and leaders use appropriate procedures when responding to parental complaints. Most concerns are resolved informally and managed within the stated timescales.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

- 20. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. Leaders have designed a curriculum that is relevant and responsive to pupils' complex individual learning needs. The school's pathways of learning follow a planned programme of 'one plan' cycles, which are informed by EHC plans and liaison with parents regarding pupils' social communication needs. These 'one plan' cycles identify gaps in pupils' learning and how best to build their knowledge and skills over time. They are working documents updated termly. Leaders use advice from professionals such as speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and multidisciplinary therapists to inform their curriculum planning. Staff work in partnership with such professionals to assess pupils and, typically, to devise appropriately challenging targets for them.
22. Thorough and effective training and typically close monitoring of pupils' progress enable staff to provide individual pupils with precise support, which maximises the impact of the therapies that they receive. Teachers' expertise in techniques to support pupils with Autism enables them to address their communication and behavioural needs effectively. The seamless integration of effective teaching techniques, including signing and the use of symbols and communication aids, ensures that pupils are fully engaged in their lessons, regardless of their individual needs. Pupils with communication difficulties, including those who have Autism and those with moderate learning difficulties, make good progress in their communication skills.
23. Pupils read regularly, from a wide range of suitable texts, and take part in local authority initiatives for reading. Staff modify and adapt texts when required to meet pupils' stages of reading and particular needs. The writing curriculum is enhanced through pupils' study of carefully selected and often challenging core texts to develop pupils' language and comprehension skills well.
24. Staff relate much of the mathematical teaching to real-life scenarios appropriately to aid pupils' understanding of how the mathematical content applies to their experience of the world. Such teaching enables pupils to build their knowledge of numbers, fractions, addition and subtraction and develop their problem-solving abilities. This work is enhanced by pupils' engagement in the local authority campaign to improve mathematical fluency and use concrete materials to embed concepts that the school teaches.
25. Pupils successfully engage in aesthetic and creative arts subjects such as digital computing, music and art. Pupils learn about different artists and produce work that shows understanding of their themes and techniques, including through work produced while studying towards the current NCFE art qualification.
26. Older pupils follow accredited programmes and personalised curriculum plans that are designed to teach them the skills they need for their future. They achieve accreditation in English, mathematics, and science functional skills, as well as ASDAN independence and life-skills related courses, including food preparation and cooking. In recent years, individual pupils have achieved GCSEs in English, mathematics and science.
27. Teachers and well-briefed classroom support staff provide pupils with high levels of individual tuition and support, including clear and effective oral feedback, ensuring that each pupil learns confidently and successfully. The guidance staff give to individual pupils enables them to understand and be ready to take the next small step that will improve their work. Most staff are confident in using assessment information to track and monitor pupils' progress and to target support where it is

needed. However, not all staff use this information effectively enough to be sure that all pupils are making the best progress they can each week.

28. The programme of recreation activities develops a range of skills for the pupils. Weekly visits to a local outdoor activity learning centre enable pupils to experience and learn bushcraft, archery, cooking and bracelet making. Such activities contribute to the development of co-ordination skills and communication skills as well as emotional wellbeing.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

- 29. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

30. The school's 'five therapeutic strategies', which it identifies as sensory, nurture, focus, co-ordination and communication, are designed to meet the educational, therapeutic, social, emotional and behavioural needs of individual pupils. Pupils who find learning difficult or have particular learning barriers, such as social communication or sensory difficulties, are well supported because staff focus sharply on meeting their needs.
31. Pupils' personal development is well supported by a bespoke personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme. This includes age-appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE) alongside health education. Pupils learn about topics such as 'families and people who care for me,' respectful relationships, including friendships, how to use the internet and online media safely, intimate relationships, maintaining sexual health, and positive sexual relationships. The programme enables pupils to develop the key skills and knowledge to support their personal, social and emotional lives. Specific and very focused pieces of work to support individual pupils are common, such as helping them understand the complexities of consent or appropriate and inappropriate touch. Consequently, pupils show mutual respect for both adults and their peers.
32. Pupils engage in discussions about the origins and meaning of festivals of diverse faiths in their religious studies (RS) lessons. Pupils learn about the similarities and differences between religions, including through viewing and discussing well-chosen videos that compare their ideas and practices. Pupils also engage in art and craft activities to produce versions of religious artefacts from various faiths. Lessons in guitar, ukulele, digital music and art provide a forum through which pupils can express their spiritual emotions and thoughts.
33. Pupils experience effective physical education (PE) through activities such as on-site football coaching and swimming at a local school, alongside weekly visits to a local adventure centre to experience activities such as aerial trekking, biking and obstacle courses. These activities and the guidance that pupils receive help develop their physical skills and stamina. They also enhance concentration, communication and teamwork skills, thereby helping pupils to develop resilience and self-esteem.
34. Leaders and staff continually assess what pastoral support is best for each pupil at the school. This is particularly the case for pupils whose behaviour could be very challenging if not managed carefully. Pupils' personal support plans include transition activities for the management of behaviour and risk. Leaders and staff respond effectively when pupils need, for example, space or quiet to help take control of their behaviour, including through the appropriate use of breakout rooms. Such strategies enable learning to continue without undue disruption. Staff provide pupils with the support they need to cope when a little time and patient understanding is needed.
35. Staff enable pupils to feel valued and confident to try new things by treating pupils in a way that gains their trust. Staff are aware of potential triggers that can affect individual pupils' behaviour. They employ strategies effectively to minimise the risk of incidents brought on by personal triggers occurring in the first place and ensure that any incident that arises is dealt with calmly and swiftly. As a result, pupils are polite, attentive and respectful to the staff and other pupils. Leaders and staff promote an ethos of tolerance and positive support for others throughout the school and make it clear that bullying is not tolerated under any circumstances.

36. Senior leaders ensure that admission and attendance registers are suitably maintained, as required. They inform the local authority whenever pupils join or leave the school, including at non-standard times of transition.
37. Leaders ensure that pupils are supervised effectively by deploying school staff so that sufficient and observant supervision is in place at all times of the day. The school has sufficient numbers of suitably trained staff, including higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs) to whom pupils can talk to should they require assistance.
38. The school has suitable arrangements to protect staff, pupils and visitors from the risk of fire, including an up-to-date fire risk assessment and regular fire evacuation drills. Senior leaders ensure all fire, health and safety checks and maintenance are carried out, including those undertaken by external specialists.
39. First aid arrangements are effective. The school implements appropriate procedures for caring for any unwell pupils, including with regard to the administration of any first aid or medication. The medical facilities are suitable, and staff receive appropriate first aid training.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

- 40. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

41. Leaders provide appropriate support in a timely fashion to prepare pupils for adulthood. They develop pupils' understanding that stable, caring relationships, which may be of different types, are at the heart of happy families and are important for pupils' security as they grow up. Pupils learn about British law, including the definition of marriage as a formal and legally recognised commitment between two people, intended to be lifelong. They also explore recent developments, such as those around the status of civil partnerships, and the legal age to lawfully marry. The school enables pupils to develop their sense of responsibility towards others effectively. For example, pupils willingly take on responsibilities such as librarian, office assistant and food technician. Such roles, along with head pupil responsibilities, enable pupils to develop decision-making and leadership skills.
42. Leaders also encourage pupils to be responsible and active citizens beyond the school. Pupils develop their social skills in the community during visits to local schools and outdoor learning centres. They lead successful fundraising events, such as the regular 'Christmas jumper day' to raise funds for an international children's charity. Opportunities to have their voice heard through pupil voice boxes and surveys enable pupils to suggest improvements, such as the type of games used in the hall area during break and lunchtimes, and specific resources for each of the three classrooms.
43. Planned learning programmes support pupils' clearer understanding of equalities, different cultures and beliefs. Books are also carefully chosen to support pupils' personal development and understanding of people, different cultures and life in modern Britain. Staff develop each pupil's sense of personal and cultural identity and encourage them to be confident, receptive and respectful towards others' identities and tolerant of different perspectives and choices. Human rights lessons and discussions foster a culture of respect, equality and social justice. This enables pupils to understand and advocate for their rights and the rights of others. Staff ensure that issues related to equality and prejudice are considered across all school activities, including when visiting local community facilities, and tackle discrimination if it is experienced.
44. The school prepares pupils effectively for life after school. For example, cooking sessions enable pupils to plan and prepare meals, purchasing ingredients for preparing and producing meals and cakes. Pupils learn about money management, including solving financial data problems. Pupils are also taught about banks, personal bank accounts and credit cards, the different methods of payment and how to successfully budget for themselves through the money-related decisions they make.
45. Careers education and transition planning are effective. Leaders work closely with parents and providers to ensure that pupils are placed in the most appropriate provision when they leave Clarity. This includes planned one-to-one sessions to discuss pupils' individual needs. In recent years, pupils have moved on to college places having been appropriately supported to do so.
46. The code of conduct in the school is customised democratically in each class and promotes other aspects of British fundamental values, such as the rule of law and tolerance. Staff promote mutual respect among pupils with different needs, personalities and complex behaviours. Pupils learn to play together across age groups and aptitudes both inside and outside of lessons. Pupils show high levels of working together and co-operating well, such as playing football and basketball during breaks and lunchtimes.

47. Pupils explore moral and ethical issues and concepts such as equality, responsibility and sacrifice, including reflection on those who gave their lives and suffered in the First and Second World Wars. Pupils explore themes such as how behavioural choices can cause harm to oneself and others, such as damage to property or behaviour such as racist abuse.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

- 48. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Safeguarding

49. Senior leaders ensure that safeguarding systems and practices are effective and reflect the requirements of current statutory guidance. The proprietor maintains suitable oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements.
50. The school has a comprehensive staff-training programme for staff, ensuring that everyone, including staff new to the school, has a clear understanding of their responsibilities towards safeguarding pupils and how to identify and record any safeguarding concerns that may arise. The safeguarding team receive additional training to equip them for their particular responsibilities. Staff also receive thorough training about the particular vulnerabilities of pupils who have SEND and specific safeguarding considerations that may apply at times. For example, staff receive instruction on how to keep pupils safe in the event of any challenging or violent behaviour. This includes when it is appropriate and not appropriate to use physical restraint. The safeguarding team monitor staff's understanding of safeguarding issues and the school's procedures.
51. The safeguarding team takes timely action whenever safeguarding concerns arise, including when the involvement of external agencies is required. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding maintain thorough and appropriate records of any concerns raised and how they are addressed.
52. The school ensures that all adults who work with pupils are subject to thorough and appropriate safer recruitment checks before they begin working at the school. The single central record of appointments accurately records all such checks as required.
53. The school is aware that online safety will always be an area where the pupils need particular support and guidance. The school provides rigorous training for staff about online safety and holds workshops for parents to ensure that everyone is aware of the dangers and can teach pupils to keep themselves safe online. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe when online. Leaders implement a suitable internet filtering and monitoring system.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 54. All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	Clarity Independent School
Department for Education number	881/6073
Address	Clarity Independent School Bridge Farm Barn Woodhill Road Sandon Essex CM2 7SG
Phone number	01245408606
Email address	admin@clarity.essex.sch.uk
Website	www.clarity.essex.sch.uk
Proprietor	Clarity SEN Consultancy Limited
Chair	Mrs Debbie Hanson
Headteacher	Mrs Debbie Hanson
Age range	6 to 17
Number of pupils	13
Date of previous inspection	21 to 23 September 2022

Information about the school

55. Clarity Independent School is an independent co-educational special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and complex learning profiles. The proprietor is the headteacher and is responsible for the governance of the school.
56. All pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
57. No pupil speaks English as an additional language.
58. The school states its aims are to provide a fresh start in learning through fun, motivating and personalised education that meets each child's needs through tailored interventions that help overcome challenges, build skills so that pupils enjoy learning, feel valued, are excited to come to school each day and make progress.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

30 September to 2 October 2025

59. A team of two inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

60. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the proprietor
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

61. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

62. The school's previous report was by Ofsted. This is the first report of the school by ISI.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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