

Inspection of Serenity School Eltham

70 Court Road, London SE9 5NP

Inspection dates: 17 to 19 June 2025

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy to attend this well-run school. They like the organised routines and the friendly, welcoming staff who greet them warmly each day. What makes the school exceptional is the way that all staff work together to ensure pupils get the right support at the right time. This means that pupils achieve well in the subjects they learn, even though many have previously found engaging in education a challenge.

The school expects pupils to behave well and to do their best in lessons. Pupils understand the expectations that the school has of their behaviour. They like the positive reward system in place and take pride in their work. If pupils need extra help to manage their emotions, this is done calmly and quickly so they can get back on with their learning.

The school has a strong pastoral system in place to make sure that pupils' personal and social development has the highest priority. Pupils learn important life skills such as how to get on with other people, listen to the point of view of others and resolve any disagreements in an appropriate way. This supports pupils in becoming resilient and gaining the independence skills that they will need for their future life.

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

The school has put in place an excellent curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils who attend. The curriculum is broad and balanced and includes communication, literacy and mathematical knowledge and skills. The curriculum is having a strong impact. In the early years, children develop the essential social, communication and language skills that they will need for their next stage. For example, they learn to explore interesting objects and materials, how to get along with their peers, how to interact with others and join in with games and activities.

The school has a well-organised system to support the training and development of all staff, including those who might be new to the school or to a teaching career. Staff feel well supported and say the curriculum helps them identify the knowledge and skills they should teach their pupils. This knowledge is sequenced carefully so pupils can build on what they already know. New staff receive support from experienced teachers and senior leaders, so they quickly build the subject and specialist knowledge they need.

A high-quality system is in place to teach pupils to read. The school carries out robust checks on pupils' reading ability when they arrive at the school. If they are still learning to decode text, they have regular, targeted phonics teaching. This helps them to catch up as quickly as possible so that they can access the rest of the curriculum. In the early years, children learn the essential skills and knowledge they need to be ready to learn phonics as soon as they can, including listening and joining in with songs and rhymes to develop their phonological awareness. Older

pupils who continue to need support follow a similarly well-organised and targeted approach, which is sensitive to their age.

The school makes careful and meaningful checks to ensure that pupils are making progress through the curriculum. As a result, staff have an excellent knowledge of their pupils' educational abilities and their social and emotional needs. This helps staff adapt lessons carefully and to put in the right support for pupils to succeed.

Most pupils attend well and, as a result, they benefit from the strong curriculum. Where pupils are not attending regularly enough, the school takes sensible and persistent action to improve this, including adapting learning programmes. Pupils engage well in lessons and like the variety of activities that the school provides, including the 'daily mile' and other opportunities to have movement breaks or activities, which help pupils to remain calm and regulated. Pupils participate in lessons well, and behaviour is mostly calm. Sometimes lessons are interrupted, but pupils are supported to return to learning quickly.

Through the curriculum, pupils learn about the way different people live their lives, and the importance of tolerating and celebrating these differences. They also learn essential knowledge for living their lives in modern Britain, including democracy, fairness and justice. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe online and in the community.

The school has put together an excellent programme to develop pupils personally. This includes activities such as daily tutor time, which strengthens pupils' social and emotional skills, and workshops that teach about safe and healthy relationships. Interesting trips and visits include a local observatory and seeing how the police work on the River Thames. There are opportunities for residential overnight camps and regular sporting events with other schools.

Careers education is taught from the earliest age. Pupils learn about the many different jobs they could do in the future and explore what kind of jobs might suit them. The school supports pupils very well in researching their options, including college placements and apprenticeships. Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage.

The proprietor body has established a strong vision for the school and has put in place systems to support and challenge leaders at all levels. The school is compliant with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	147991
DfE registration number	203/6009
Local authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	10375113
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	4 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	148
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Serenity School Eltham Ltd
Chair	Ebere Emezie
Headteacher	Claire Pettman
Annual fees (day pupils)	£41,000 to £76,000
Telephone number	020 4529 1960
Website	www.serenityschool.org.uk
Email address	elthamoffice@serenityschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 to 28 April 2022

Information about this school

- Serenity School is an independent special day school in the London Borough of Greenwich.
- Since the school's last standard inspection in April 2022, there have been two additional inspections because of concerns raised. One was in May 2023 and the other was in January 2025. The school has also had a material change inspection in September 2024.
- The school provides for pupils with autism and pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan and are placed by a variety of local authorities.
- The school does not use any 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.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the proprietor body, the chief executive officer for the group and the headteacher. Inspectors also met with other senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, including reading, mathematics and personal, social and economic education.
- For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of 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 reviewed a range of policies and documents. They also checked the

school's compliance with the independent school standards.

- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. Additionally, the inspector spoke to pupils to discuss their views about the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also took account of staff's views through the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Gary Pocock, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Teresa Neary

Ofsted Inspector

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