



Independent special schools

Generally, independent special schools provide high levels of **care, support and guidance**. They address even the most complex needs of individual pupils and foster **well-being** effectively.

What's going well

- Overall, independent special schools provide an inclusive and caring ethos for their pupils.
- Where support is carefully planned, this enables pupils to develop positive attitudes and become successful learners.
- Pupils make good progress in their learning and well-being where staff have a strong understanding of the needs of their pupils and therapeutic approaches are well co-ordinated.
- Where staff follow safeguarding procedures closely and leaders monitor these rigorously, there is a strong culture of safeguarding.

What needs to improve

- Therapeutic approaches are not always co-ordinated well enough to meet the needs of pupils and staff.
- A few pupils have persistently poor attendance, and this limits their progress.
- Leaders don't monitor safeguarding procedures rigorously enough in all schools.



Overall, schools provide a broad range of **learning experiences** and teaching approaches that promote pupils' **progress in learning and well-being**.

What's going well

- Schools have generally adapted their curriculum well to meet recent challenges and are beginning to re-establish partnerships to extend the learning opportunities for pupils.
- The curriculum frequently has a strong focus on personal, social and health education and prepares pupils well for adult life.
- Where teaching is strong, teachers plan engaging activities that are well matched to pupils' abilities and interests.

What needs to improve

- There is a lack of opportunities for pupils to learn about important topics such as sexual harassment, radicalisation and exploitation.
- Teaching does not always link well enough to pupils' abilities or build in opportunities for progression.
- Staff do not always have enough knowledge and experience of working with pupils with ALN.



Leaders continue to be resilient and flexible as they build back from the pandemic and plan for improvement.

What's going well

- Leaders have shown considerable commitment and resilience in ensuring that their schools remained open for much of the pandemic.
- Leaders often provided effective management and supervision of the day-to-day work of the school through the pandemic.
- Where schools make strong progress against Estyn recommendations, leaders continue to maintain a clear strategic direction, ensuring effective professional learning and beneficial school improvement activity.

What needs to improve

- Strategic leadership is not effective in those schools where quality assurance is more about compliance, and improvement planning is not detailed enough.
- Professional learning is less effective when it does not focus on the core skills of teaching, supporting pupils with complex needs, or the role of teaching support staff.
- Leaders find it a challenge to recruit and retain suitably experienced and qualified teaching support staff.