



## 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.