

Inspection of Vanguard School

Lollard Street, Kennington, London SE11 6QH

Inspection dates:	1 and 2 July 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Rachael Clements. This school is part of Liberty Academy Trust LTD, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Nicola Crossley, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Tucker.

What is it like to attend this school?

Due to several changes in leadership, pupils at this school have experienced a period of disruption that has affected their learning and progress. Following recent improvements, things have now settled. A caring and supportive culture has been established.

Pupils work hard and demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. The school has high expectations and ambitions for pupils. While there are still some inconsistencies in how the curriculum is delivered, most pupils are showing significant improvement in their learning across subjects.

Pupils have ample opportunities to develop their talents. These include a range of clubs, such as basketball and drumming. The clubs support pupils in developing the essential skills of communication and resilience. Pupils further develop these qualities through work experience with local theatres and employers. Pupils talk excitedly about these activities.

Pupils feel safe because staff are vigilant and supervise them closely and sensitively. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Staff get to know pupils well and genuinely have their best interests at heart. Pupils describe the school as 'fantastic' and 'safe', reflecting a strong sense of belonging and pride in their community. Their eagerness to speak positively about their experiences demonstrates high levels of investment in the school's culture.

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

The school has designed an ambitious curriculum that ensures that pupils get a curriculum similar in breadth to that of a mainstream school. In most subjects, the curriculum is carefully designed to ensure that pupils learn the foundational knowledge that enables them to study for formal qualifications. Special attention is given to ensuring that pupils have the necessary vocabulary and prior knowledge to learn new concepts.

In most subjects, teachers implement the curriculum effectively. This results in pupils being generally engaged in their learning and achieving well. Creative subjects like art are used effectively to build confidence and engagement. In some subjects, the school has not considered precisely enough what pupils should learn and by when. This prevents teachers from accurately identifying and building on what pupils know and remember.

The school has successfully raised the profile of reading. Staff create as many opportunities as possible for reading during the school day. This helps pupils become more confident readers.

Students in the sixth form value the guidance they get about their next steps. The school makes sure that the careers guidance programme is embedded throughout the school. This means that nobody loses sight of the importance of preparing pupils for adulthood. A significant number of students gain places in education, employment or training when they leave the school. They also achieve bespoke qualifications that provide them with employability skills. Students at school are part of an impressive trust-wide student

executive team that plays an important role in the running of the school and trust. This promotes pupils' confidence very well and demonstrates the value the school puts on listening to its students.

Reward systems help motivate pupils to behave well. Regular 'check-ins' with pupils about their feelings help them manage their emotions. When pupils are upset or angry, staff help them to calm down using consistent and positive language.

Pupils' attendance typically improves once they join the school. Staff work closely with parents and external agencies to improve attendance. The school is constantly seeking different ways to support pupils to overcome barriers that prevent them from attending school regularly.

Since the last inspection there has been significant staff turbulence. This has led to some disruption for pupils, parents and staff. Current leaders have implemented substantial and enduring enhancements across the school, clearly demonstrating their capacity to further its development. The trust, governors, executive leaders and school leaders have systems in place to carefully monitor the effectiveness of the school.

While most staff feel behaviour is managed effectively, some staff feel that there is more work to do in this area. The majority of staff express job satisfaction and enjoyment in working at the school.

Parent satisfaction with the school is mixed. Some say that the school is 'the answer to their prayers'. Others are disappointed over frequent changes in leadership and the lack of continuity. However, parents typically express confidence in the school's direction and in its leadership.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the curriculum does not set out what pupils need to know in sufficient detail. This means that, on occasion, pupils are not taught concepts in a logical order to help build their knowledge and understanding over time. The school should clarify the knowledge and vocabulary that pupils should learn in these subjects and the order that this should be taught.
- Leaders should ensure that their vision and strategic direction are clearly understood by the whole community. While improvements have been made, not all staff and parents are aware of the school's progress or the rationale behind recent changes. Communication strategies should be strengthened to build confidence and shared purpose across the school community.

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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	142928
Local authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	10379157
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	59
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	7
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Tucker
CEO of the trust	Nicola Crossley
Principal	Rachael Clements
Website	www.vanguardschool.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	6 and 7 December 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Vanguard School opened in January 2020 and caters for pupils aged 11 to 19 who have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder.
- All the pupils attending this school have an education, health and care plan. The school aims to meet the needs of those pupils who are not able to access mainstream education because of their special educational needs and/or disabilities, but who are able to access nationally recognised qualifications, such as GCSE and BTEC National Diploma courses, by the end of Year 11.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspection team met with the principal and other leaders. The lead inspector also met members of the local governing body, a group of trustees and the CEO of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, art and humanities.
- The inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors spoke to school leaders about behaviour, attendance and pupils' personal development. The inspectors also spoke to pupils about these areas.
- 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.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils, staff and parents.

Inspection team

Francis Gonzalez, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Tom Canning

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025