

# Inspection of a good school: The Studio School Liverpool

41 Greenland Street, Liverpool, Merseyside L1 0BS

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Inspection dates: 23 and 24 April 2024

## Outcome

The Studio School Liverpool continues to be a good school.

The principal of this school is Jill Davies. This school is part of Northern Schools Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Nigel Ward, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Geoff Wainwright.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils attending this school are prepared exceptionally well for their future careers and lives. They are excited about the opportunities provided that will help them to pursue careers in digital media, technology and creative industries. Pupils told inspectors that they are encouraged to be independent and that they have the freedom to be themselves. Pupils are happy at school.

The school has high expectations of pupils' learning. Pupils value the professional and productive atmosphere. They strive to live up to the school's motto that 'every day is an interview'. Pupils benefit from a curriculum that is enriched with opportunities to engage with employers and with higher education settings. Detailed learning across subjects is linked. This helps pupils to develop different skills in readiness for their future careers. Consequently, they move on to strong destinations.

Pupils enjoy positive relationships with each other and with their teachers. They behave well. Pupils are attentive during lessons and they want to succeed.

Pupils benefit from a range of employer-led projects. These support and enhance pupils' professional experiences and learning. For example, following the recent study of knife crime, sixth-form students have designed and led a project to install trauma kits in knife crime hotspots across the city.

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

The school provides an ambitious curriculum that is tailored to the interests and needs of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils

study a range of academic and technical qualifications, with a focus on specialisms in creative, digital and entrepreneurship pathways. The curriculum is well organised and sets out clearly the subject knowledge and skills that pupils will learn at each stage. The school engages with local employers to ensure that the curriculums in specialist areas, such as in game design and engineering, are informed by the current industries.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. This enables them to deliver the content of subject curriculums consistently well. Teachers explain new ideas and concepts by breaking them down into simple parts and checking that pupils understand. This helps pupils to deepen their learning. However, in a small number of subjects, teachers do not use assessment methods well enough to identify some of the gaps in pupils' subject knowledge. Occasionally, this means that teachers do not know what subject content pupils need to revisit and practise before moving on to new learning. At times, this hinders some aspects of pupils' achievement.

Staff are swift to identify pupils with gaps in their reading knowledge and those who need extra help to become fluent readers. There are effective programmes in place to support these pupils to catch up with their peers. Pupils value the school's mini libraries. Students in the sixth form read avidly for pleasure, including from texts that support their wider understanding of their subject specialisms.

Staff identify and understand the needs of pupils with SEND. Teachers make effective use of relevant information to ensure that these pupils' needs are successfully met during lessons. Pupils with SEND are fully involved in all aspects of school life.

Pupils' attendance is uneven. The school has recently implemented research-led strategies to identify and to better understand the barriers affecting pupils' attendance. Increasingly, a coordinated, whole-school approach is beginning to ensure that more pupils are not missing out on their valuable education. Despite this, too many pupils remain persistently absent.

Pupils receive high-quality and impartial careers guidance. Trips to universities and apprenticeship providers help them to understand their future training options. Many students in the sixth form secure places on competitive university courses and degree-level apprenticeships.

The school supports pupils' wider development well. For example, pupils receive regular 'drop-down' days and workshops that address themes, such as healthy relationships, mental health and the possible risks associated with technology. This learning continues into the sixth form. Pupils relish a range of enrichment activities, such as boxing, photography and life drawing.

Trustees and governors provide the school with expert support. They hold the school to account effectively for the quality of education that pupils receive. The school is mindful of staff's workload. Staff are positive about working here and they feel well supported. They value opportunities to share good practice and to access professional development opportunities. This helps them to fulfil their roles well.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, teachers do not use assessment methods well enough to identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge. This hinders how well pupils make sense of new learning. The school should ensure that assessment strategies give teachers enough information about what pupils need to revisit and practise before moving on.
- Some pupils do not attend school often enough. This hinders their progress through the curriculum. The school should ensure that that these pupils attend school regularly, and on time, so that they can fully benefit from all that the school has to offer.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2015.

## 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 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139589
<b>Local authority</b>	Liverpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	10314037
<b>Type of school</b>	Other secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy studio school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	14 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	292
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	114
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Geoff Wainwright
<b>CEO of trust</b>	Nigel Ward
<b>Principal</b>	Jill Davies
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thestudioliverpool.uk">www.thestudioliverpool.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	4 December 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The Studio School Liverpool provides academic and vocational education for pupils aged 14 to 19 years old.
- Leaders and staff at The Studio School Liverpool are drawn from the workforce of the on-site linked provision, Liverpool Life Sciences UTC.
- Pupils at The Studio School Liverpool experience much of their education, personal development and social time alongside the pupils of Liverpool Life Sciences UTC.
- The school makes use of five registered alternative providers to provide part-time education for a very small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 10 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the principal and with other leaders. They also spoke with the CEO, members of the trust, the local governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, science, and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- An inspector discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector met with the SEND coordinator and reviewed samples of documentation relating to pupils with SEND.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 took account of the views of parents expressed through Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.

## Inspection team

Kate Bowker, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Craig Yates

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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