

# The Education Centre

1–3 Barclay Court, Haywards Heath, RH16 1DB

**Inspection dates** 17–19 March 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management	Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The proprietor's and leaders' arrangements to review and update the school's policies and procedures are not effective enough and have not ensured that all the Independent School Standards are met.
- The arrangements for checking the progress of the different groups of pupils in the school are not good enough to ensure they all achieve as well as possible.
- Lesson activities are not always at the right level for all pupils, and this holds a few pupils back.
- Although there is an appropriate range of training for staff, this is not securely tied into their annual appraisals, which means that underperformance is not remedied as quickly as it might be.
- As the school no longer meets all the standards, the school is not as effective overall as it was at the last inspection.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have ensured that teaching is of good quality so that pupils make good progress.
- Pupils behave well and personal mentors are used effectively to help pupils improve their behaviour.
- Pupils feel valued; they look forward to coming to school each day, and their attendance has improved.
- Although the school's admissions register requires improvement, in all other respects the school promotes the well-being of pupils effectively and ensures their safety in school.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons, jointly with the headteacher, taught by eight members of staff.
- He examined the work of pupils in their books and folders as well as that displayed on the school walls.
- Discussions were held with the proprietor, headteacher, senior leaders and teaching staff.
- Formal and informal discussions took place with pupils.
- Meetings were held with pupils' parents and carers and emails from other parents and carers were read.
- A number of school documents were considered including policies, procedures and records of pupils' behaviour and progress, together with records of health and safety procedures.
- The inspector looked at 10 questionnaires submitted by members of staff.
- There were no responses to the Ofsted, Parent View questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Mick Megee, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Education Centre is an independent special day school for boys and girls based in the centre of Haywards Heath in West Sussex.
- It was first registered as an independent school in March 1991.
- The school was last inspected in September 2011 when its effectiveness was judged to be good.
- A new headteacher was appointed from September 2014 following the resignation of the previous headteacher.
- The school is registered to provide education for 41 pupils in the age range 11 to 16 years. There are currently 29 pupils on roll, of which 18 are boys and 11 girls.
- Pupils are placed at the school as a result of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, which have prevented them from regular attendance at previous schools.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan, and about a third of pupils are in the care of their local authorities.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school's aim is 'to create a place where everyone feels valued and can achieve their potential'.

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

- Improve the quality and impact of leadership and management by:
  - developing systematic and regular procedures to review and update school policies in order to ensure that all the Independent School Standards are met
  - developing a system to check how well groups of pupils are doing when compared with others nationally.
- Improve the quality of teaching in order to raise pupils' achievement further by:
  - making sure that lesson activities are set at the right level for all pupils, so they can learn as well as they should
  - making sure that staff development programmes are securely linked to appraisals.

### The school must meet the following independent school standards.

- The proprietor must ensure that:
  - the school's admission register is maintained in the required manner, including the names of pupils in alphabetical order, their gender and the name and address of every person known to be a parent or carer of the pupil. The admission register must contain the particulars of any parent or carer with whom the pupil normally resides with their emergency telephone number, and the name and address of the school last attended (paragraph 15).
  - all the required information is provided or made available for parents, carers and others, including the proprietor's telephone number, arrangements for exclusions, examination results and the number of complaints (paragraphs 32(1), 32(1)(a), 32(1)(b), 32(2)(b)(i), 32(3)(a), 32(3)(e) and 32(3)(f)).
  - a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented which gives details about the use of a complaints panel as well as the recording and confidentiality requirements during the complaints process (paragraphs 33, 33(h), 33(i), 33(i)(i), 33(i)(ii), 33(j), 33(j)(i), 33(j)(ii), 33(k)).
  - the leadership and management of the school meet the standards for independent schools as set out in paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a) and 34(1)(b).

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management

### require improvement

- The proprietor and the school's leaders have not made sure that all the Independent School Standards are met.
- The information made available for parents, carers and others does not provide all that is required, as was the case in the previous inspection. The admission register and complaints policy omit some important details. This is because the school has not set up systematic processes to make sure that policies and procedures are always rigorously checked, updated and implemented. However, leaders have made sure that the unmet standards have not had a negative impact on the pupils' personal and academic progress or on the quality of teaching.
- The proprietor, senior and middle leaders understand what is good about the school.
- They have an excellent knowledge of each pupil's individual characteristics and learning habits, but the school does not have methodical procedures for checking precisely where improvement is required, especially in the performance of the different groups in the school, such as girls and boys. This means that senior and middle leaders find it hard to make national comparisons. They cannot be certain that all pupils are being offered the most useful assistance in their learning and personal development.
- The new headteacher has begun regular visits to classrooms to make an assessment of the quality of learning and teaching. The observations undertaken jointly with the inspector show that his assessment is objective, accurate and consistent.
- The headteacher gives helpful oral feedback and recommendations to teachers. They appreciate this and say that this is improving their practice.
- Leaders expect staff and pupils to maintain high standards of courtesy, teamwork and individual effort. The proprietor and staff are wholly committed to equality of opportunity for the pupils. It is evident that staff are flexible and resilient in responding to pupils who are finding learning difficult.
- Staff and pupils say that leaders have made the school a happy place in which to learn where everyone gets on together. This was confirmed by the very positive atmosphere in classrooms and at lunchtimes.
- Pupils study a wide range of subjects, broadly based on the National Curriculum, in which they make good academic progress, including with literacy and numeracy skills. Interwoven through these subjects is the personal and social education programme that ensures that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Staff continuously take opportunities, for example through classroom discussion and a wide range of education visits, to extend pupils' awareness of and respect for the variety of lifestyles and cultures around them and further afield.
- The school has a clearly stated policy that requires all staff members to ensure partisan political views are never promoted.
- The school makes good arrangements to provide appropriate advice and guidance to pupils when they are considering their options for further education and careers after they leave.
- The school ensures that all pupils are kept safe. The designated lead person for safeguarding is a senior member of staff who has received the required advanced-level training and all staff regularly receive first-aid and child protection training. The required checks to make sure that all staff members are suitable to work are in place. There is continuous monitoring of all aspects of the premises and fire safety.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The school has no governors.
  - The proprietor is proactive and committed to promoting the continued development of the school.
  - Through regular visits, the proprietor gathers a good range of information about individual pupils' achievement.
  - All staff receive a regular appraisal of their performance from the proprietor, but this is not linked to their staff development. Plans are underway to make this link secure.
  - The proprietor has not checked well enough that all the Independent School Standards are met.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils****require improvement****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. All pupils come with a fragmented experience of education. Their learning has been disrupted by non-attendance, poor behaviour and significant periods of exclusion from school. They often have poor relationships with adults.
- Once settled in school, pupils begin to respond to the high expectations of the staff, especially their own personal mentor with whom they often develop a deep and trusting bond. Parents, carers and pupils speak in a moving way about the difference in behaviour that the school has brought about, especially through the close ties the whole family forms with the mentor.
- One parent or carer, speaking for others, said, 'The mentor is fabulous. She phones and texts out of school, even during the holidays to see if we're all OK. If I'm having a hard time at home, she says "give us a bell" and then she speaks to my daughter and calms things down. It's such a relief to have someone to call on like that.'
- Pupils say that bullying is extremely rare and that when it occurs staff deal it with quickly and effectively. Pupils know about the dangers of bullying through mobile phones and social media.
- Pupils get on well together almost all of the time. They put this down to the small size of the teaching groups, which is one of the aspects of the school they appreciate the most. There was no swearing or discriminatory language heard during the inspection and pupils know the reasons why such language should not be used.
- During a meeting with pupils, when the inspector asked one boy if boys were respectful to girls, the girl sitting next to him said, 'He's one of the nicest boys in the school. Like yesterday when I was upset he came and talked to me and cheered me up with a joke.'
- In the classrooms and elsewhere, the warm but respectful relationship with adults is evident and this helps pupils to settle quickly, promoting their learning and personal development well. The mentors have a very positive effect here too. One pupil said, 'My mentor is amazing. She won't let me give up, especially in maths. If I'm having a bad day, she soon calms me down.'
- Because they enjoy the school, pupils' attendance improves very quickly after they join the school. Individual records show that, for almost all pupils, attendance is well above the national average. As a rule, pupils are on time for their lessons and ready to learn, although a few pupils new to the school are still not arriving on time.
- Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for the preparation of school lunches, where the whole school community gathers together to share food and a chat about the morning's events. Pupils carry out their allotted catering and serving tasks enthusiastically with the support of the specialist teacher.

**Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. This is because the Independent School Standards that relate to the admission register are not met, because the register does not contain all the information required.
- All other regulations regarding the welfare, health and safety of pupils are met. As a result, pupils are safe in school.
- Before they join the school, pupils have often displayed serious risk-taking behaviour. Through effective supervision and individual mentoring, pupils are kept safe and they and their parents and carers feel secure and appreciate the school's efforts in this area.
- The accommodation provides a secure environment for safe and effective learning. Staff are vigilant in checking up on the identity of all visitors to the school who are signed in and out.
- Staff are skilled at assessing risk and ensuring that pupils' safety is fundamental to the planning of all activities, especially when pupils go on educational outings and visits. The proprietor and leaders have rigorous arrangements for ensuring fire safety, including the regular testing of safety equipment and evacuation of the premises.

**The quality of teaching****is good**

- The quality of teaching is good and all the Independent School Standards that relate to the quality of teaching are met. This ensures that pupils learn well, make good progress and get back on track in developing their basic skills in numeracy and literacy.
- Classroom staff have high aspirations for pupils, both in improving their attitudes to learning and in catching up where they have fallen behind. Staff go out of their way to generate a relaxed atmosphere for learning in lessons, so that the pupils regain their confidence and overcome any fear of making mistakes.
- Pupils are given good opportunities that motivate them to improve their reading and writing, for example,

by acting out a simple play at the beginning of a lesson on how to write a play script.

- Teachers offer pupils good opportunities to improve their mathematical skills, for example, through plotting coordinates on a grid. Pupils were then encouraged to draw their own simple shapes and identify the coordinates.
- Teachers have a very good grasp of, and enthusiasm for, the subjects they teach. They inspire pupils with their own delight and passion for the activities they have planned.
- Teachers regularly check up on how well pupils are doing in all their subjects. They record any new skills and knowledge the pupils have gained and what they need to do next. Most teachers use this information well to present activities that are at the right level, but occasionally they set activities which are too hard or too easy for the pupils and this restricts their progress.
- There is always lively dialogue, discussion and debate between staff and pupils, which allows the staff to check pupils' understanding, keep them interested and to develop the pupils' thinking and ideas.
- Teaching assistants skilfully assist pupils to take an active part in lessons, especially when they are finding learning difficult or becoming upset.
- Parents and carers enjoy the good communication between themselves and school. Homework is offered to all pupils, and every support is given so that parents and carers can support their children's learning at home.
- There are good learning opportunities provided for pupils to move on to further education or employment with training when they leave school, including a good range of qualifications, including GCSE. Early entry to GCSE is not provided.

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- All pupils join the school with low standards of attainment because of their past poor experience of learning, including periods of absence or exclusion from previous schools.
- Because of these circumstances, it is often difficult for staff to ascertain from previous schools the pupils' current levels of knowledge, skills and understanding. Once at the school, staff undertake a thorough assessment of all aspects.
- From these starting points, given the strong, reassuring support from classroom staff and mentors, pupils make good progress and achieve well, including in English and mathematics. They begin to fill in the gaps in learning that have arisen.
- The school meets all the Independent School Standards for the quality of education.
- The school's leaders have devised their own scheme to measure pupils' progress as pupils move through the school. The records show that pupils make continuous good progress overall. However, they do not allow a comparison to be made with other pupils nationally.
- The range of subjects taught successfully broadens pupils' acquisition of skills and understanding and their academic and personal development.
- When asked, pupils say that they really enjoy the practical activities such as cooking, construction and woodturning. Staff allow pupils to spend extra time in the workshop or kitchen as a reward or to motivate pupils who experience difficulty in their other subjects. This works well.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 work towards and achieve a good range of qualifications, including functional skills awards at entry level, BTEC and GCSE. These qualifications provide them with a good foundation for their further education or employment with training.
- At present there is no discernible difference in the achievement of the different groups within the school, such as girls and boys, but the school cannot be sure that this is always true. It does not check and analyse systematically its records of pupils' progress to make sure that each pupil is doing as well as he or she might.
- The most able pupils, once they are attending regularly, become very motivated and respond well to the opportunities offered at the school. The quality of work on display and in portfolios shows that there are some pupils who are exceptionally talented in art and woodwork.
- All pupils undertake regular physical education at the local leisure centre where they experience a variety of sports and ways to keep fit, including swimming. During these sessions, the pupils develop a good range of physical skills.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	126149
<b>Inspection number</b>	454256
<b>DfE registration number</b>	938/6249

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

<b>Type of school</b>	Independent special day school
<b>School status</b>	Independent
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	29
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Will Astell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Geoffrey Wyatt
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3–4 November 2011
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£21,300
<b>Telephone number</b>	01444 450111
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