

Finches School

Levy Building, 80 East End Road, Finchley, London N3 2SY

Inspection dates

12–14 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The proprietors and headteacher have not ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Leadership and management are inadequate. Leaders have not monitored the quality of teaching closely enough and as a result, teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate.
- Long-term planning is not used effectively to prepare lessons and teachers' lesson planning is weak. It does not take into account the learning needs and prior attainment of the pupils. As a result, pupils do not make enough progress.
- The teaching of reading is inadequate. Suitable reading books are not available and pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read are not being effectively supported.
- Teachers do not have high expectations of pupils. Lessons are not challenging enough and questioning does not allow pupils time to process information or think for themselves.
- Teachers do not give pupils helpful advice on improving their work. As a result, pupils do not know their strengths and areas for improvement.
- Outcomes for pupils are inadequate. Leaders do not check pupils' progress well enough in any subject, but particularly in reading. Systems for the tracking of pupils' progress are not effective.
- Pupils' personal development requires improvement because the timetable and lack of effective planning limits opportunities to develop pupils' language and social skills.

The school has the following strengths

- The proprietors have identified the school's weaknesses and taken rapid and decisive action to close the school and integrate the few pupils on roll to another school within the group, or find them an alternative school placement.
- Safeguarding is effective.
- Pupils' behaviour is good.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school, attend well, feel safe and are well cared for.
- Parents are very positive about the school.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils transition to their new school as sensitively and effectively as possible.
- In the meantime, improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - all the independent school standards are met
 - the quality of teaching is monitored closely and teachers and support staff receive effective training
 - the curriculum is well planned and resourced so that it enables all pupils to make good or better progress in all subjects
 - leaders and teachers know how well pupils are doing and provide effective support and challenge for pupils to improve further.
- Improve pupils' outcomes and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that:
 - lessons are appropriately challenging and meet the needs of pupils so that they can make good or better progress
 - teachers consistently and effectively help pupils to improve their work
 - teachers question pupils effectively to encourage them to think for themselves
- Improve pupils' personal development by ensuring that:
 - the timetable and appropriate individual targets enable pupils to make good or better progress in their language and social skills.
- The school must meet the following independent school standards:
 - Ensure that the written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is implemented effectively. (paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a))
 - Ensure that the written policy, plans and schemes of work take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an education, health and care plan. (paragraph 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i))
 - Ensure that teaching enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught. (paragraph 3, 3(a))
 - Ensure that teaching fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves. (paragraph 3, 3(b))
 - Ensure that teaching involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time. (paragraph 3, 3(c))
 - Ensure that teaching shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in lessons. (paragraph 3, 3(d))
 - Ensure that teaching demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject

matter being taught. (paragraph 3, 3(e))

- Ensure that teaching utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range. (paragraph 3, 3(f))
- Ensure that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly, and that information from that assessment is used to plan teaching so that pupils can progress. (paragraph 3, 3(g))
- Ensure that a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both, is in place. (paragraph 4)
- Ensure that the proprietor and persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently, fulfil their responsibilities effectively and actively promote the well-being of pupils. (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c))

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate because leaders have not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met, especially in relation to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Despite having a year with no pupils on roll to prepare Finches School for new admissions, leaders have failed to ensure that the school is appropriately resourced to meet the needs of pupils with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).
- There are no systems in place for the monitoring of teaching. The inspector's observations of lessons and checks on pupils' work and teachers' planning found the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to be consistently inadequate. All visits to lessons were undertaken jointly with the school's recently appointed principal.
- The school's curriculum covers all the required areas of learning. However, while there are planned programmes for each subject which contain all the relevant detail, they are not implemented effectively and it is unknown what much of the planning of lessons is actually based on. As a result, teachers' planning of lessons does not ensure that pupils have the opportunity to make progress.
- The school does not have an effective system to identify pupils' starting points or to check on their progress. Leaders and teachers do not know how well pupils are doing or are expected to do. As a result, they do not have enough information to provide pupils with effective support and challenge.
- Training and development opportunities for staff are very limited. They have been too focused on safeguarding and not on meeting the learning needs of pupils with ASD.
- There is no formal system for the management of staff performance within the school. No formal targets related to pupils' progress or quality of teaching have been set with staff. Consequently, teachers are not held to account for the quality of their teaching.
- The school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is adequate. Plans to teach pupils about different faiths, cultures and to respect and care for others form part of the planned programme for personal, social, health and economic education. These plans include coverage of careers education, fundamental British values and the preparation of pupils for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum promotes equality of opportunity, taking account of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010.
- School leaders have ensured that suitable behaviour, physical intervention and countering bullying policies are in place. Behaviour is well managed and though there have not been any, the school is ready to record any incidents of misbehaviour or bullying.
- The complaints policy is up to date, meets requirements and is published on the school's website. There have been no complaints.
- The two parents spoken to were very happy with the work of the school, confirming that their children enjoy coming to school, feel safe and are well looked after.
- The inspector also spoke to a senior manager at the local authority responsible for placing

the majority of pupils at the school, who confirmed they had no concerns. However, they had not yet undertaken any review of pupils' placements as these only began in September 2016.

Governance

- The school is governed by a proprietorial body. The executive team meets regularly to review the progress of all the schools in the group. They acknowledge the significant error in allowing Finches School to admit pupils in September 2016. This is reflected in the performance management review of the headteacher, which identifies the preparation year as 'not a productive twelve months'.
- The proprietors recently appointed a principal to monitor the quality of provision for pupils with ASD across their schools. Her feedback following observations at the end of September 2016 summarise the many concerns identified in this report, though she acknowledges that things have worsened since this visit.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have succeeded in ensuring there is a culture of safeguarding in which pupils feel safe and secure, and any concerns are raised immediately.
- The school's policy, available on its website, meets all requirements and reflects the latest statutory guidance, 'Keeping children safe in education' (September 2016).
- The school has two designated safeguarding leads, who are both suitably trained. Checks on the suitability of staff to work with children have been carried out and recorded on the single central record of staff vetting checks. Admission and attendance registers also meet requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate because pupils are not making good progress in any subject, largely as a result of the lack of understanding of how to meet the needs of pupils with ASD.
- While appropriate long-term planning is in place for all the necessary areas of learning, it is not used consistently by teachers. Too much teaching is 'ad hoc' and planned without sound educational reasoning. For example, for pupils who cannot yet read, highly inappropriate English lessons focused on identifying complex vocabulary from a Dickensian novel.
- Pupils often work in their books for English, mathematics and humanities. They also complete a significant number of worksheets for all other subjects. Tasks in books are not always completed sequentially and often include incomplete sheets that have been stuck in. There is no evidence that pupils are making progress, as the work that pupils complete does not reflect planning that builds on previous knowledge or skills.
- The resources available for learning are inadequate. Pupils do not have reading books and the only book available for a pupil to read to the inspector was far too difficult for him.
- Classroom displays are incomplete throughout the school and the classroom environment is poor. Empty shelves, a messy games cupboard, few toys and resources and only one

complete display in the main, very large classroom reflect a learning space that is uncared for. There is also a lack of visual prompts, aids and appropriate targets.

- The planning and use of additional adults is very poor. Teaching assistants lack knowledge and understanding of ASD and are poorly directed by teachers. As a result, teaching assistants spend a lot of time watching teaching activity or doing nothing while pupils engage in 'reward' time.
- Teacher questioning is weak. Pupils are not given time to process answers or consider what has been said. Instead, answers are given to them and they do not have to think for themselves.
- The school does not make good enough use of valuable learning time, such as lunchtimes. This reflects the lack of a structured and consistent timetable. Social skills targets are placed on the lunch tables, but they are inappropriate and are not referred to by staff or pupils. On both days of the inspection, pupils ate their food quickly and then stayed in the building for almost an hour of more 'reward' or 'break' time. This time is not planned or structured in any positive way. Staff are involved only to supervise pupils while they played.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Arrangements for the promotion of pupils' personal development lacks planning and structure. For example, pupils' individual targets identified in their education and behaviour plans do not feature in teachers' planning or in lessons. The social skills targets that were seen in lessons and during lunch were inappropriate and not referenced by staff.
- The timetable is not structured enough. Pupils have a very significant amount of 'break' and 'reward' time, which they understand to be the same. There are no planned opportunities taken for staff to facilitate social learning, ask questions or challenge pupils' thinking. Pupils do not go outside of the building on a daily basis. As a result, pupils' personal and social development is restricted.
- Pupils are safe. The arrangements for safeguarding, health and safety, security and maintenance of the premises are all adequate. Risk assessments are fit for purpose.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils listen and respond well to instructions. They are compliant and generally engage with whatever is asked of them, despite the poor quality of teaching. Pupils are welcoming and were happy to share their work and demonstrate their reading skills with a visitor.
- The lack of appropriate planning and the long school day, which is seven hours long and does not include time outside of the building as part of the standard timetable, could make it difficult for pupils to maintain good behaviour. However, the positive relationships and level of pupils' compliance mean that this is not the case.
- Pupils' attendance is generally very good.

Outcomes for pupils**Inadequate**

- Pupils' social and academic progress is inadequate because of weak teaching.
- Pupils' progress is not measured in any subject. Starting points are unknown and teaching plans make no reference to pupils' aptitudes and specific needs. Leaders and teachers do not know whether pupils are making progress.
- Pupils' social progress is reported informally and anecdotally. However, this progress is not referenced using any system or against any set criteria and therefore teachers do not know whether pupils are making the progress expected of them.
- Pupils' workbooks and folders are disorganised, unmarked and it is unknown how far the work accurately reflects what pupils are capable of.
- Pupils make especially inadequate progress in reading because there is no planned teaching of reading or phonics (the teaching of letters and sounds) and there is a lack of suitable reading books.

School details

Unique reference number	139558
DfE registration number	302/6050
Inspection number	10021714

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.

Type of school	Day special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Proprietor	Cavendish Education Ltd
Chair	Aatif Hassan
Headteacher	Adrian Mahon
Annual fees (day pupils)	£48,500
Telephone number	020 8343 0105
Website	www.finchesschool.co.uk
Email address	info@finchesschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 May 2016

Information about this school

- Finches School is owned by Cavendish Education Ltd and is expected to close by the end of the autumn term in 2016. The small number of pupils on roll are planning to transfer to The Holmewood School or an alternative school when Finches School closes.
- The school caters for up to 20 pupils aged seven to 18 years with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). All pupils have education, health and care plans and are placed by their local authorities.
- The school is located within the Sternburg Centre, a Jewish community building in Finchley, London. The school has no religious affiliation. The building will continue to be used by Cavendish Education Ltd for one of its other schools once Finches School closes.
- The school's last standard inspection, when it was known as Marvel School, was in June 2014, when the overall effectiveness was judged to be good. An emergency inspection in

January 2015 identified unmet independent school standards in relation to safeguarding. The school was acquired by Cavendish Education Ltd in September 2015 and became Finches School. A progress monitoring inspection in October 2015 found that some independent school standards continued to be unmet. The school's most recent inspection was its second progress monitoring inspection in May 2016 when the previously failed standards were judged to be met. Finches School began to accept pupil admissions again in September 2016.

- The school makes no use of alternative provision and uses no other premises.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to take place earlier in the cycle than previously planned.
- The school was given one day's notice but inspection activity could not take place at the premises on 12 October 2016 because they were closed.
- The inspector jointly observed teaching and learning in eight lessons or parts of lessons with the school's principal. He also heard pupils read and spoke to pupils informally throughout the inspection.
- The inspector jointly scrutinised pupils' work and the school's information about pupils' progress.
- No parents completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, but the inspector met with two parents.
- The inspector had several meetings with the operations' director, principal, headteacher, administrator and teaching staff. He also met with the headteacher and lead ASD teacher from the school that most of the pupils will be transferring to.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of documentation, including all school policies, logs, evidence of staff training and information related to safeguarding and health and safety. The inspector also considered additional information and evidence in relation to the independent school standards and toured the premises.

Inspection team

James Waite, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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