

Music Stuff Education

Units 3 & 4, The Cuthbert Centre, 877 Ashton Old Road, Openshaw, Manchester M11 2NA

Inspection dates

18–20 October 2016

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Governors and the proprietor do not follow safeguarding procedures rigorously or consistently. As a result, arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not meet statutory requirements.
- New buildings are not yet fully equipped or refurbished. All of the required facilities, including computers and hot water on one site, are yet to be provided.
- Leaders and the proprietor do not adequately monitor or evaluate teachers' performance. They do not ensure that teachers are held fully to account for pupils' progress.
- Governance is weak. The school's governors and proprietor have failed in their duty to ensure that the school meets the independent school standards, including those that relate to pupils' safety.
- Staff do not manage pupils' behaviour consistently well, or fully implement related policies and procedures.
- As a result of shortcomings in safeguarding procedures, the school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Planning documents, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans, are out of date. They do not indicate succinctly enough what the school needs to do to further improve.
- Improvements in the quality of teaching are hindered because training is limited. Few opportunities are available for teachers to learn from good practice in other schools.
- Pupils do not make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics because the quality of teaching is variable.
- Teachers' feedback to pupils is not guided well enough by senior leaders. It is too variable and not effective enough to ensure pupils' good progress.
- Teaching assistants are not always effectively deployed to ensure that pupils achieve well enough.

The school has the following strengths

- The proprietor and the headteacher are determined to improve the school, raise standards and make a difference to the lives of pupils.
- Pupils attend regularly and enjoy coming to school. They say that they feel safe and the best thing about the school is the teachers.
- Systems for monitoring incidents of poor behaviour are well established. The school's behaviour log shows good communication with parents and carers.
- Senior leaders' work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective and helps to enhance pupils' understanding of British values.

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 the governors, proprietor and senior leaders improve the safety and welfare of pupils by:
 - ensuring that suitable arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils
 - precisely following the statutory guidance concerning the pre-employment checks of staff and governors
 - ensuring that heating systems are fully operational in all school sites
 - ensuring that all required policy documents are up to date and available on the school's website
 - carrying out all necessary fire safety checks in all school sites
 - providing an appropriately equipped medical room for pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress by:
 - ensuring that teachers always have the highest possible expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving
 - making sure that teaching assistants are deployed effectively to maximise pupils' progress
 - deepening pupils' knowledge and understanding across the curriculum, including in English, mathematics and science
 - developing pupils' understanding of what they need to do to improve their learning
 - providing opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills in order for them to fully appreciate the relevance of this subject
 - making sure that the feedback to pupils and the assessment policies are fully understood, and consistently applied, by all members of staff
 - ensuring that pupils are fully challenged, across a wide range of subjects, to engage in their learning and realise their potential.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - making sure that governors, the proprietor and senior leaders have an exact understanding of their responsibilities in relation to the independent school standards, ensuring that all are met
 - strengthening governance to ensure that members challenge the school and have a precise understanding of what the school needs to do to further improve
 - ensuring that all planning documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, is precise, up to date and gives an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development
 - making sure that improvement plans are shared with all members of staff, including senior leaders and teachers
 - ensuring that teachers' performance is monitored and evaluated regularly, so that they receive the support they need to raise standards for pupils
 - ensuring that professional development opportunities are available to staff, especially teachers, to enhance their understanding of developments in education

- providing opportunities for teachers to learn from good practice in other schools
- providing teachers with high-quality resources, including text books, in order to improve the quality of teaching and boost pupils' progress
- Improve pupils' behaviour and attitude to learning by:
 - making sure that pupils take pride in the presentation of their work
 - ensuring that teachers take a consistent approach to managing pupils' behaviour, and applying the school's behaviour policy, particularly in class.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that teaching at the school utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly (paragraph 3, 3(h)).
- The proprietor must ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that the behaviour policy is implemented effectively (paragraph 9, 9(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by drawing up and effectively implementing a written health and safety policy (paragraph 11).
- The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (paragraph 12).
- The proprietor must ensure the suitability of persons appointed as members of staff at the school and must ensure that no such person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction (paragraph 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that all the appropriate pre-employment checks are made for all staff who work with children. These include enhanced criminal record checks and prohibition order checks (paragraph 18(2)(d)).
- The proprietor must ensure that in the case of any person for whom, by reason of that person living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, obtaining such a certificate is not sufficient to establish the person's suitability to work in a school, such further checks are made as the proprietor considers appropriate, having regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 18(2)(e), 18(3)).
- The proprietor must ensure that all members of the governing body are checked to ensure that they are not in contravention of a prohibition order, or an interim prohibition order (paragraph 20(1), 20(6), 20(6)(a)(ii), 20(6)(b), 20(6)(b)(i), 20(6c)).
- The proprietor must keep a register which includes all the necessary information required on the suitability of staff, governors and the proprietor to work at, manage and govern the school (paragraph 21(1), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(v),

21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b), 21(4), 21(5), 21(5)(a), 21(5)(a)(i), 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(b), 21(5)(c)).

- The proprietor must ensure that suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided for the sole use of pupils (paragraph 23(1), 23(1)(a)).
- The proprietor must ensure that there is accommodation for the examination and treatment of pupils and for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet (paragraph 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b)).
The proprietor must ensure that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured (paragraph 25).
- The proprietor must ensure that the acoustic conditions and sound insulation of each room or other spaces are suitable, having regard to the nature of the activities which normally take place therein (paragraph 26).
- The proprietor must ensure that toilets and urinals have an adequate supply of cold water and washing facilities have an adequate supply of hot and cold water (paragraph 28(1), 28(1)(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that suitable outdoor space is provided in order to enable pupils to play outside (paragraph 29(1), 29(1)(b)).
- The proprietor ensures that the school's address, telephone number and headteacher's name are provided to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate (paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(a), 32(1)(b), 32(1)(c), 32(1)(f)).
- The proprietor must ensure that a statement of the school's ethos (including any religious ethos) and aims is available on the school website (paragraph 32(2), 32(2)(d)).
- The proprietor must ensure that the persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their roles so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- School governors and the proprietor have not been effective in ensuring that all the independent school standards are met. Some of the unmet standards have potentially serious consequences for the welfare, safety and personal development of pupils. In addition, pre-employment checks on new members of staff are not sufficiently rigorous. As a result of these failings, the leadership and management of the school are inadequate.
- The school's safeguarding procedures are not as effective as they should be. Governors and the proprietor do not have a full understanding of their statutory responsibilities with regard to the independent school standards.
- Because of poor planning, particularly in relation to the Cuthbert Centre site, pupils' safety is compromised. For example, at the time of the inspection there was no working boiler on this site, meaning that the school failed to comply with several standards relating to the provision of hot water and washing facilities. In addition, fire regulation checks have not been carried out on all sites. There is no provision for pupils with minor injuries or medical needs on either of the school's new sites.
- The school has applied to the Department for Education to expand to include two new school sites. An inspection of this additional provision, including buildings, the quality of leadership and management, teaching, outcomes for pupils, behaviour, welfare and safeguarding indicates that the school is unlikely to meet all of the relevant independent school standards in these areas should its services be expanded.
- The proprietor, headteacher and senior leaders empathise with pupils. Leaders have an in-depth understanding of the challenges faced by pupils and are committed to the school's aim of 'developing human potential as a way of increasing (pupils') personal identity, self-belief and confidence'. However, school improvement plans do not identify clearly enough what the school needs to do to improve. For example, all targets in the school's self-evaluation have expired. Many of these targets, including those relating to the full refurbishment and operation of new school sites and staff training and development, have not been met.
- The roles and responsibilities of the deputy headteacher and site managers are not clear enough in relation to improving the quality of teaching and learning. The main focus of the school's self-evaluation is on leaders improving attendance, reducing exclusions and working with parents. When leaders' responsibilities for raising standards are referenced, they lack precision.
- Too few professional development opportunities are available for staff. Teachers responsible for English, mathematics and science have little opportunity to develop their practice, or share their views and experience with colleagues across the school's three sites.
- Few opportunities are available for teachers to learn from good practice in other schools. Few high-quality resources, including text books, are available. The two new sites lack information technology resources. This poor provision impacts adversely on pupils' progress and engagement in learning.
- The proprietor has not ensured that firm systems are in place to hold the headteacher

and teachers to account. At the time of the inspection, little information was available on performance management, aside from teachers' views on the strengths and weaknesses of their own practice.

- Procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching lack clarity. Evaluations are overgenerous. They do not identify precisely enough what teachers need to do to improve, or identify training and development opportunities.
- Despite the challenging circumstances under which teachers operate, those who spoke to inspectors said that they enjoyed working at the school. They are committed to making a difference, are hopeful that the school premises will improve, and are of the view that pupils will soon settle into school life.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective. Pupils learn about world religions, including Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and Islam, and celebrate World Religion Day. They enjoy their weekly 'big debate', which recently centred on the Columbian mining disaster, and learning about issues such as human trafficking and modern slavery. All pupils celebrate Black History Month and learn about the achievements of celebrated African-American civil rights activists.
- Pupils develop a good appreciation of British values through their citizenship studies and the personal, social and health aspects of the curriculum. Pupils understand democratic processes. They enjoy having their say on the school council, which recently voted to decide on the focus, and location, of the end-of-term school trip.

Governance

- Governance is weak. Governors do not have a precise understanding of the independent school standards and do not carry out sufficiently rigorous checks on leaders' work. Governors have not ensured that all the independent school standards are met, including those relating to safety and pupils' welfare.
- While the proprietor has regular 'hands-on' contact with the school, governors do not have a full enough understanding of school priorities and weaknesses, or what it needs to do to further improve. There is little evidence that governors have met regularly during this time of considerable turbulence and change. For example, there is little written information on how governors are supporting the school with its expansion plans and its move to new premises. In addition to this, there is scant information on how governors are to monitor new provision, including that for key stage 3 pupils.
- Minutes of meetings and a discussion with the chair of the governing body reveal that governors do not have a good enough understanding of the quality of teaching, outcomes for pupils or the proprietor's plans to extend provision to include vocational qualifications.
- Much information disseminated to governors relies on word-of-mouth discussions with the principal. As a result, governors are not in a position to fully challenge senior leaders, or hold them to account.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective. Governors, the proprietor and senior leaders have not paid enough attention to the Department for Education's statutory guidance on 'Keeping children safe in education' when checking the suitability of staff and governors to work at or visit the school.
- Senior leaders provided evidence to indicate that staff have read current guidelines on keeping pupils safe. In addition to this, staff said that they feel confident in following

procedures should a pupil raise a concern about their safety or well-being.

- Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they feel safe at the school because they trust members of staff. They indicated that they would not hesitate to share any concerns.
- During the inspection, leaders updated a number of school documents, including safeguarding and special educational needs policies, and published them on the website. Several amendments were made to the school's single central register and website.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement because it varies across the school and is inconsistent in a number of subjects, including English, mathematics and science. As a result, the impact of teaching over time on pupils' progress is variable.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are not always high enough. Consequently, pupils do not always fully engage in their learning, or make fast enough progress. In addition, pupils' work is not always set at the correct level of challenge.
- The quality of feedback to pupils varies across the school. While some teachers are vigilant and provide detailed marking and feedback, others do not apply the school's marking and assessment policy consistently. Where books contain up-to-date guidance, there is little evidence that pupils improve their work as a result of teachers' comments.
- Not all teaching assistants are effectively deployed. In almost all classes, there is a high ratio of adults, including teachers and teaching assistants, to pupils. However, opportunities are missed to fully benefit from this generous staffing ratio. During the inspection, few examples were seen where pupils, including the most and least able, engaged in different learning activities commensurate with their abilities.
- Teaching does not always deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding across the curriculum. For example, across key stages 3 and 4, there is little evidence in pupils' mathematics books of problem-solving or reasoning activities. As a result, some pupils fail to see the importance of this subject outside school.
- In the school's two new sites, resources are limited. For example, few textbooks are available. In two classes where pupils were reading from texts by Dickens, 'A Christmas carol', and Louis Sachar's 'Holes', they read from photocopied texts. Similarly, computers are yet to be made available to pupils. This makes it very challenging for teachers to continually engage pupils, maintain their interest and ensure their good behaviour.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is not consistently good. This is because teachers have too few training opportunities and limited scope to share, and learn from, good practice across the school and further afield.
- Inspectors saw evidence of good teaching and good subject knowledge. This was exemplified in an English class where the teacher, and teaching assistant, supported pupils well in grappling with different literary techniques. Pupils were encouraged to identify alliterations, similes and metaphors in a text and think of their own examples. Pupils made good progress and agreed that the saying 'It's raining cats and dogs' is a metaphor.
- Teachers have good relationships with pupils and are empathetic, committed and supportive. They understand the challenges pupils face and the impact of complex

barriers to their learning.

- 'Booster sessions' in English and mathematics are well managed by teachers and effectively monitored by senior leaders. Evidence provided by the school shows that such sessions help to enhance pupils' reading, writing and calculation skills.
- Where learning is most effective, teachers are clear about what pupils are learning, encourage them to do their best and praise them highly for their efforts. This was demonstrated in a fast-moving mathematics class where the teacher skilfully increased the level of complexity of pupils' mathematics work as the lesson progressed. At the same time, he constantly reminded pupils that 'You can do it.' He raised pupils' confidence by giving them constant feedback throughout, thus ensuring their good progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Due to shortcomings in the school's safeguarding procedures, most notably in relation to checks on the suitability of staff, pupils are not safe. Consequently, the school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Pupils have little understanding of what they can do to improve their learning. They do not always take pride in the presentation of their work, especially in key stage 3, and are not always prepared to participate in lessons.
- Pupils benefit from impartial careers advice. For example, in the autumn term in 2016, key stage 4 pupils received careers advice at school and were helped to write their personal statements and complete applications for apprenticeships and college places. All post-16 pupils have access to career options information. This helps them to think about their career choices and consider the qualifications needed for them to realise their ambitions.
- Almost all pupils go into further education or apprenticeships after their time at the school. However, the school holds no information on the retention rate of pupils or their level of success. Senior leaders are aware of the importance of checking on pupils' long-term destinations. They have made this a priority area for development.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and know they can talk to any member of staff if they have a worry or concern. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that the best thing about their school is 'the people'. One commented, 'Teachers make us feel safe, they understand us and listen and help us out.'
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe when online. They learn about cyber bullying and know not to share personal information with anyone over the internet.
- The school makes effective provision for pupils' physical well-being. Pupils have a weekly programme of physical activities that take place at a local gym. They enjoy boxing, football, golf, go-kart racing and trampolining. Provision for pupils' emotional well-being is not developed as well as this.
- Pupils have a good understanding of racism, which they say is 'when you say something bad about culture, skin colour or race'. They are adamant that racism never happens in school. Pupils know what homophobic bullying is. They say that a person's sexuality is 'no big deal' and that people should 'get over it'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils are not consistently well behaved. This includes in the classroom and when moving around the school. They are not always respectful towards staff, or each other.
- Disruptions can occur at various times, including at the end of the day when pupils are waiting for taxis, which are often late. This leads to misbehaviour since there is too little to engage pupils while they wait.
- The school has a comprehensive behaviour policy, with appropriate rewards and sanctions. However, teachers do not always take a consistent approach to managing pupils' behaviour or applying this policy. For example, unruly behaviour and inappropriate language used in class are not always challenged.
- The school has comprehensive evidence to show that pupils' attendance is vastly improved when compared with their attendance at mainstream schools and pupil referral units. Senior leaders do all they can to impress on pupils the importance of attendance. The effectiveness of this work, and the daily breakfast club, helped to ensure that all key stage 3 pupils were in attendance throughout the course of the inspection.
- The school keeps detailed and up-to-date behaviour records. Well-established procedures are in place for recording incidents of poor behaviour and communicating with parents. In the rare event of a fixed-term exclusion, parents are immediately informed. The pupil is then isolated with a member of staff before they are taken home. Letters are sent to parents informing them of the terms and conditions of the exclusion.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes across key stage 3 and 4 classes are too variable because the quality of teaching is variable. Inspection evidence, including the school's own information on pupils' performance and work in pupils' books, indicates that outcomes for pupils require improvement.
- Information on pupils' past performance is often lacking because it is not always available from pupils' previous schools. In addition, information that is available is often minimal. This is because many pupils have spent long periods out of education and have moved between several schools and pupil referral units throughout their primary and secondary education.
- The school keeps assessment information on the performance of current and previous pupils. Weekly assessments monitor and measure pupils' progress in a range of areas. However, assessments are linked more closely to attitudes to learning, merits received, behaviour and pupils' own self-assessment of their performance than to academic performance.
- Almost all pupils have special educational needs, linked to their emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. Inspection evidence indicates that where teaching is strongest, these pupils make good progress often from exceptionally low starting points. Pupils from minority ethnic groups make similar progress to their peers.
- Pupils with statements of special educational needs and education, health and care plans are well looked after. All are admitted to the school through the Manchester pupil referral unit and come with comprehensive information on their prior performance and specific educational needs. Available information for these pupils, including that seen in case studies, indicates that most of these pupils make good progress from their

exceptionally low starting points.

- The main qualifications offered by the school are GCSE specifications in English, mathematics, science and statistics. Pupils also study subjects such as citizenship and information and communication technology. Functional skills run alongside pupils' GCSE studies. At the end of Year 11 in 2016, almost all pupils attained at least one qualification. This included all girls and 84% of boys. No pupils attained 5 GCSEs at A* to C. Although some pupils secured 'B' and 'C' grades, the average grades were 'E' and 'F'. However, this represents good progress for most pupils from their exceptionally low starting points.
- Leaders' systems for monitoring progress show that during 2015 and 2016 most pupils made 'steady progress' in reading, writing and mathematics. For some, the rate of progress was too slow. Senior leaders acknowledge that such slow progress is linked to pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. They are currently planning to offer a range of vocational courses in areas such as music, digital technology and computing, in order to secure pupils' better engagement.
- The school has very few high-attaining pupils. However, there is a wide range of ability among pupils across key stages 3 and 4. Teachers' planning, and observations of teaching, show that learning activities do not always meet pupils' different skills and abilities.

School details

Unique reference number	137887
DfE registration number	352/6006
Inspection number	10020720

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	Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	51
Proprietor	Andrew Portersmith
Chair	David Hobbs
Headteacher	Matthew McCann
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,000
Telephone number	0161 223 8700
Website	www.musicstuffeducation.org
Email address	musicstuff@musicstuffeducation.org
Date of previous inspection	18–19 December 2012

Information about this school

- At the time of the inspection, Music Stuff Education was in the process of refurbishing and developing two new sites that it had occupied since the beginning of September 2016. The proprietor and senior leaders were updating the school's website to include the statutory information required for parents and carers. This included safeguarding and complaints policies and procedures.
- The school operates from three sites in Manchester and is registered to take up to 51 pupils. Currently, the main site, The Cuthbert Centre, caters for 10 key stage 3 pupils. The Old School House and Fog Lane sites cater for a total of 38 key stage 4 pupils.
- The school works with pupils who have become disengaged and de-motivated by traditional mainstream education, and aims to develop human potential as a way of increasing (pupils') personal identity, self-belief and confidence.

- Almost all pupils have missed long periods of education and have wide gaps in their learning. A large proportion of the pupils have been excluded from school. The overwhelming majority have behavioural, social and emotional difficulties and are referred to the school by the Manchester pupil referral unit.
- Almost all pupils have special educational needs. A small proportion of pupils have either a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- A sizeable minority of pupils are in the care of the local authority. Several pupils have been referred to the school by the youth offending service. The school provides for pupils from across Manchester and other areas, such as Stockport and Oldham.
- The school does not meet the requirements for the publication of information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- As part of the inspection, the Department for Education asked Ofsted to consider an application for a material change to provide education services from two new sites, The Cuthbert Centre and The Old School House. These premises formed part of the inspection.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across three sites and looked at pupils' workbooks and assessment information on their progress and attainment.
- Meetings were held with the proprietor, headteacher, deputy headteacher, unit leaders and teachers. Discussions took place with pupils on one site.
- Inspectors held meetings with a representative from the Manchester pupil referral unit. A telephone discussion took place with the chair of the governing body.
- Staff questionnaires were not available by the end of the inspection. There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents. These included the school's reviews of its own performance, development plans, checks on the quality of teaching, safeguarding documentation including risk assessments and various records of pupils' attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

Lenford White, lead inspector
Dawn Platt

Ofsted Inspector
Her Majesty's Inspector

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