

# The Education Centre

1–3 Barclay Court, Market Place, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 1DB

## Inspection dates

27–29 June 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- The proprietor and leaders have not ensured that the school meets all of the independent school standards.
- Leaders have not checked the performance of the school closely enough and it has declined significantly since the last inspection.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective. Leaders underestimate potential risks to pupils. The school's plans to protect pupils from harm are insufficient.
- The proprietor and leaders have not provided staff with enough guidance and training. Staff are not equipped to support and teach the increasing number of pupils with complex needs who have joined the school recently.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate. Teachers' planning does not take into account what pupils are capable of.
- Pupils do not make enough progress in English and mathematics. Not all pupils get the extra support they need with reading and writing.
- Expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. Leaders and staff do not make good enough use of what they know about pupils to remove barriers to learning and plan for the future.
- Overall, pupils' behaviour does not improve enough while they are at the school because work to support them is not effective.

### The school has the following strengths

- Some parents are very supportive of the school's work.
- Pupils have helpful opportunities to develop skills in vocational courses such as cooking and art.
- School leaders and staff work very hard to build positive relationships with pupils and maintain communication with parents.

### 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?

- Improve leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that the performance of the school is regularly reviewed and evaluated
  - holding leaders and staff to account for pupils' progress, behaviour and safety
  - providing training, guidance and supervision for staff mentors so that they are better equipped to teach and support pupils with complex needs and vulnerabilities
  - formulating and promptly implementing plans to support pupils' academic progress, welfare and behaviour
  - reviewing plans systematically and regularly when pupils' needs change or after a serious incident
  - sharing information about pupils' successes and setbacks more regularly and formally with all staff and recording this information for future reference.
- Urgently improve safeguarding and child protection in the school by:
  - keeping leaders and staff up to date with current guidance and advice from the Secretary of State for Education
  - acquiring a better understanding of risk assessment and how to plan for particular pupils who may be at risk of harm
  - improving the quality and security of record-keeping related to referrals and child protection concerns
  - establishing a clear procedure for evacuating the building and ensuring that pupils know exactly what to do and can be trusted to follow procedures promptly in an emergency.
- Improve pupils' behaviour by:
  - providing pupils with more guidance and practice in managing and regulating their own behaviour and emotions
  - making better use of information about pupils to anticipate potential flashpoints and pre-empt minor incidents escalating into more serious situations.
- Improve teaching, learning, assessment and outcomes for pupils by:
  - ensuring that teachers have better information about what pupils know, understand and can do and that they set high expectations for attendance in lessons, attitudes to learning and productivity
  - making sure that all pupils who need to catch up with reading and writing are able to access suitable programmes of extra support
  - raising expectations of what pupils can achieve in mathematics
  - setting more challenging work for those pupils who are most-able.

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

- 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) and 7(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (paragraph 12).
- The proprietor must ensure that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified (paragraph 16, 16(a) and 16(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that no 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) and 18(2)(b)).
- The proprietor must keep a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question. The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is, in relation to each member of staff ("S") appointed on or after 1 May 2007, whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to 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 such a direction (paragraph 21(1), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(iii) and 21(3)(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that the temperature of hot water at the point of use does not pose a scalding risk to users (paragraph 28 and 28(1)(d)).
- The proprietor must ensure that 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 so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
  - actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraph 34, 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)).

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Inadequate

- The proprietor and school leaders have not ensured that all the independent school standards are met, particularly those related to pupils' welfare, health and safety. As a result, there are actual and potential risks to pupils' safety and well-being.
- School leaders, including the headteacher and the proprietor, do not monitor the school's performance closely enough. They have not reviewed the quality of teaching, learning and assessment thoroughly. Consequently, they think that the school is better than it is.
- Leaders have not ensured that staff are well prepared for the important roles they perform. All staff are mentors for pupils and are responsible for supporting their behaviour and welfare, and for communicating with parents and other agencies. Staff are incredibly committed to their pupils and want to do their best for them, but it is challenging work and they are inadequately trained to carry it out.
- Staff do not receive enough advice about how to improve their teaching. The headteacher visits lessons, but offers very little extra guidance or feedback to teachers. Any feedback given to staff tends to be supportive and encouraging, but lacks precision. Targets set as part of staff's appraisal are unchallenging and not likely to lead to improvement.
- Staff are so busy managing pupils' behaviour, anxieties and problems that in many cases they have lost sight of how they should be helping pupils to grow up, learn more and manage their own emotions.
- Leaders have an unrealistic view of mentoring and mistakenly believe that staff's personal qualities and experience are enough to prepare pupils for life beyond school. Leaders have not reviewed whether the current system of supporting pupils through the mentor role is having enough impact on pupils' well-being, behaviour and progress.
- The work of the school has stood still and has not adapted sufficiently to changes in admissions and pupils' special educational needs. Staff and leaders comment frequently on the increasing complexity of pupils' difficulties and levels of traumatic experience before admission. However, leaders have not ensured that staff are fully prepared to cope and support pupils with these difficulties.
- Important statutory duties relating to safeguarding have not been carried out properly. Leaders and staff do not have a deep enough understanding of the requirements to run and maintain a special school.
- The school's safeguarding policy on the website is not the same as the version used in school and available to parents. Although the current policy in school is more up to date and comprehensive than the one on the website, it does not refer to the latest guidance from the Secretary of State for Education.
- Leaders pay insufficient attention to the progress of pupils whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable, including those who are in the care of local authorities and also those pupils who are the most able. Leaders are not able to say with confidence how well these pupils are doing compared with others in the school and nationally, because they do not have an accurate overview of progress within the school.
- The curriculum offered to some pupils is limited. There are gaps in the programme of

study for personal, social and health education, including sex and relationships education. While the curriculum in English covers a wide range of challenging texts, not enough account is taken of pupils' starting points and how they might access the material on offer when some of their literacy skills are so low. Pupils are not able to apply their knowledge in science because there are few opportunities for practical work.

- There is no systematic approach to supporting pupils with particular difficulties in reading, so some pupils who would benefit from support are overlooked. The headteacher has arranged for some staff to have training in supporting pupils with dyslexia. However, the training has not been communicated to all staff in a systematic way. As a result, pupils are not benefiting from staff's expertise.
- The use of assessment to check pupils' academic progress is unreliable. Leaders are not able to demonstrate with confidence how well pupils are doing in individual subjects, in their behaviour or in their attendance.
- The mathematics programme of study is coherent and helps to restore some pupils' confidence in their numeracy skills. Art and the vocational programmes offer good opportunities for pupils to make progress and succeed.
- Staff are loyal to the school. Most staff have been employed at the school for a long time and have developed skills which enable them to form close bonds with pupils. Parents value the work of mentors and appreciate their frequent communication.
- Leaders are committed to the school and to pupils who are highly vulnerable. There is no doubt that they care deeply for the pupils and want to do their best for them.
- Staff try hard to make the school building look attractive and inspiring with displays of pupils' work, photographs of trips and useful reminders. However, the building is hard to maintain and is not suitably adapted for pupils with complex needs. There is very little outside space, so staff have to take pupils to a local park and leisure centre for physical education and recreation.
- Many staff organise additional activities to help pupils get involved, including trips and educational visits. Such activities contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Mentors and school leaders take time to discuss pupils' thoughts and feelings, which helps to support pupils' understanding of values and moral choices.

## **Governance**

- There is no governing body at the school. The proprietor is responsible for overseeing the work of the school.
- The proprietor acknowledges that he has not checked the work of the school closely enough and has not ensured that statutory requirements of the independent school standards have been met. As a result, the school has lost its way and has declined.
- The proprietor has put too much trust in senior school leaders and has not checked that they were evaluating the school accurately or improving teaching and behaviour.
- Leaders have recently focused on assuring the school's financial viability and keeping up numbers of pupils. This focus has been at the expense of checking that the pupils already enrolled are getting the education they deserve and ensuring that the school is keeping up to date with statutory requirements.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Although the school publishes a safeguarding policy on its website, the policy does not meet requirements. Important leaders, such as the designated safeguarding leader, were not aware of the latest guidance from the Secretary of State about child protection and keeping children safe. In addition, the headteacher and proprietor had not ensured that all the checks on adults working with children had been carried out in line with statutory requirements.
- School leaders do not have a good enough understanding of how to assess and manage risk to protect pupils. For example, leaders have not put together effective plans to support those pupils who exhibit dangerous behaviour or who have particularly complex mental health needs. As a result, not all staff know how to de-escalate incidents when emotions run high, leading to pupils sometimes putting themselves and others at risk.
- Not enough is done to pre-empt potential risks of harm to pupils. Instead, mentors and school leaders pick up the pieces after an incident, but do not amend or edit plans to help avoid similar situations in the future.
- Record-keeping of safeguarding incidents is not good enough. Incidents that relate to child protection or safeguarding are recorded together with less-serious incidents. While the notes and incident reports form a chronological account of a pupil's history in the school, they are not held securely or reviewed systematically to identify patterns or inform planning.
- The school's response to serious incidents is inadequate. Actions taken following a serious incident are not recorded fully and are often not proportionate or appropriate. For example, some incidents which are clearly related to pupils' safety and emotional health are referred on to the headteacher, with little else recorded and sparse notes related to whether information is shared with the relevant people, including those responsible for child protection in the local authority.
- Those staff who are responsible for safeguarding often carry out their duties with commitment and make sure that they cooperate well with outside agencies. However, the school focuses too little on sharing information and planning appropriate support for pupils while they are in school.
- There is insufficient attention paid to pupils' online safety. Pupils do not learn enough about how to keep themselves safe while using social media. The school's response to concerns raised by pupils about cyber bullying is limited to shutting down potentially risky sites.
- The school's evacuation procedures are inadequate. While the deputy headteacher carries out regular checks of firefighting equipment and alarms, it is not clear that all pupils and staff know exactly how they can safely evacuate the building in the event of an emergency. Leaders made the decision not to have regular fire drills because of pupils' behavioural difficulties and anxieties. However, leaders have not put together any assessment of risk or clear plans to compensate.

**Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Inadequate**

- Teachers' planning does not take into account what pupils know, understand and can do. Because the school has not developed a secure way of identifying pupils' abilities and skills on admission, teachers' knowledge of pupils is confined to what they know about their personal situation and previous behaviour history. As a result, teachers' expectations of what pupils could achieve are too low.
- In mathematics, in particular, work set is often too easy and pupils therefore do not make enough progress. Pupils are pleased to get the answers right, but are not stretched with more-challenging work.
- In English, pupils' work is disjointed and does not build learning securely. Some tasks designed to help pupils to practise grammar and spelling are at a very basic level and other tasks are based on extremely challenging texts that cannot be accessed by pupils.
- In an effort to maintain pupils' cooperation, teachers and assistants are too quick to provide answers for pupils to copy and sometimes make tasks too easy, even when pupils would like to try something harder themselves. Teachers' questioning and pupils' answers do not contribute to learning because pupils are not supported with managing discussions or listening carefully.
- Not all pupils are encouraged to take their learning seriously and respect the opportunities they get. Teachers are kind and patient, but do not insist that pupils pay attention and participate. They sometimes accept pupils' disobedience and let them get away with opting out, or even leaving lessons to pick something else to do. This contributes to a decline in pupils' self-belief as they give in to their moods, and negative attitudes to learning are reinforced.
- In addition, pupils are not clear about exactly how well they are doing. Assessment on admission is not accurate or precise and pupils do not get useful feedback on either their attitudes to learning or how much academic progress they are making. Sometimes pupils are praised even though they have not worked productively or demonstrated a positive attitude. This 'praise for the sake of praise' is undermining and demotivating.
- Better learning happens in art and in the vocational programmes. In these subjects, pupils are able to judge how well they are doing for themselves. They appreciate the opportunity to create a tangible end product to be proud of. This leads to improvements in their behaviour. When this occurs, they communicate clearly and demonstrate more positive attitudes about themselves. The school is filled with examples of pupils' expressive and accomplished art and craft work.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Inadequate

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate. Pupils do not develop enough resilience and ability to regulate their own emotions.
- Pupils do not get enough support with their mental health needs. Leaders have identified that there are increasingly large numbers of pupils admitted to the school who have complex difficulties and previous traumatic experiences. However, the school relies on outside agencies to provide specialist support and has not put anything in place to help pupils on the spot.

- Pupils are not confident. They have not been taught how to manage their anxieties. There is not enough attention to developing pupils' practice with social skills, everyday manners and communication.
- Pupils do not all attend school regularly. Their presence in lessons is not tracked closely and group lists are not up to date and accurate. Although a few pupils improve their attendance immensely, there are many pupils, including those who are most vulnerable or looked after, who do not attend very well at all.
- While pupils undoubtedly benefit from a close relationship with their mentors, in a few cases this is counter-productive. Mentors are on hand to support pupils when they lose their tempers or when there are conflicts and are understandably valued by pupils and parents. However, not enough is done to support pupils in managing their emotions and state of mind.
- Pupils benefit from some authentic opportunities to contribute to the school, such as preparing the daily lunch and serving staff and each other. This activity is something that pupils really enjoy and in which they do well. As one member of staff said, 'We want the pupils to feel part of something and to belong.'

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate. The school's work to improve pupils' behaviour is ineffective.
- The school's records of behaviour show that serious incidents of refusal and potentially dangerous or violent behaviour happen too frequently. School leaders have not analysed the patterns and types of behaviour occurring on a regular basis in the school.
- Leaders encourage pupils to reflect on their behaviour and understandably, pupils often regret their actions and want to make amends. However, the school does not do enough to help pupils prevent a recurrence of the poor behaviour or put in place any interventions to help them to improve. In other words, pupils make mistakes but are not supported to learn from them and then go on to make the same mistake again. For some pupils, low expectations of their behaviour have become a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- Too many pupils routinely use poor language and goad each other. School leaders told inspectors that they have to spend a lot of time dealing with peer-to-peer abusive language and taunts, including on social media. Pupils perceive this as bullying, and although they feel that leaders and staff are on hand to tackle overt bullying, the name-calling continues and sometimes escalates into aggressive conflicts.
- For a few pupils with high anxieties, mentoring and programmes of additional support have made a difference to their behaviour. These pupils have succeeded in overcoming their fears and personal difficulties and are well prepared for the next steps in their education.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Inadequate

- Pupils admitted to the school have typically missed long periods of education. Some pupils have refused to attend previous schools or have been excluded. As a consequence, there are large gaps in their knowledge and understanding. The school does not always receive timely information about pupils' prior attainment from their previous schools.



Nevertheless, the school does not do enough to establish exactly what pupils' starting points are or make enough use of their education, health and care plans (EHC plans) to set realistic targets. As a result, pupils do not get off to a strong start in catching up.

- The school's assessment systems are patchy and do not demonstrate clear progress or help leaders to identify the gaps in pupils' learning and attainment.
- In particular, leaders and staff do not do enough to ascertain what the most vulnerable pupils need to help them to make progress, including those pupils who are disadvantaged, and those who are looked after by their local authorities. In addition, the most able pupils are not identified quickly enough and their particular needs are not catered for adequately.
- Pupils do not make enough progress in reading and writing. They are often reluctant to read and have gaps in their phonic knowledge that prove to be major barriers to accessing the whole curriculum. The school does not do enough to encourage reading for pleasure. A teaching assistant specialises in supporting pupils' literacy, but not enough use is made of her skills to support all those pupils who need help, even though her work has a demonstrable impact on individual pupils.
- Examination results in English, in particular, are below the targets and predictions set for individual pupils. A few pupils do not attend for all their examinations and a higher than expected proportion fail at entry level. Pupils achieve better results in mathematics, but because the work set does not challenge them enough, their results do not reflect their real potential.
- School leaders do not encourage pupils to study art and design at GCSE, even though their progress indicates that they are capable of doing so. Not enough time is devoted to helping pupils catch up with the course programme in art. Leaders do not insist upon good attendance at art lessons and poor provision for literacy prevents pupils from completing the required written work. This is, therefore, a wasted opportunity to make the most of pupils' potential and help them gain qualifications and self-esteem.
- In the vocational courses, pupils develop some skills and are able to work on their projects with sustained attention and interest. Progression through their studies is planned well and pupils benefit from regular assessment and guidance about how to improve. Pupils gain useful qualifications that help to prepare them for the next steps in their careers.
- Pupils are provided with useful support for their destinations after school. Very nearly all pupils go on to education, employment or training. School leaders work hard to support pupils with choices of courses or pathways. However, leaders and parents rightly acknowledge that they would like to do more to smooth the transition between school and college placements.

## School details

Unique reference number	126149
DfE registration number	938/6249
Inspection number	10025979

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	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	33
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Eostre Education Ltd
Chair	William Astill
Headteacher	Geoffrey Wyatt
Annual fees (day pupils)	£21,033
Telephone number	01444 450111
Website	<a href="http://www.theeducationcentre.info">www.theeducationcentre.info</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@education-centre.org.uk">info@education-centre.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	17–19 March 2015

## Information about this school

- The Education Centre caters for secondary aged boys and girls. A number of local authorities place pupils in the school, with most coming from West Sussex and Surrey.
- The school provides full-time education for pupils who have a range of social, emotional and mental health needs. Most pupils have missed long periods of education and many have been excluded from mainstream and other special schools.
- An increasing number of pupils are admitted who have additional special educational needs and/or disabilities such as autistic spectrum conditions and dyslexia. All pupils have EHC plans.

- The school's mission is 'to create a place where: everybody can work together to achieve his or her full potential; skills and talents are encouraged and developed; where everyone feels valued and needed and everyone knows what is expected of them and is clear about the aims of the whole school.'
- The current headteacher established the school in 1991. At the time of the previous inspection, the current headteacher had just taken up the headship role following the resignation of the previous headteacher.
- The school was last inspected in March 2015 when the overall effectiveness was judged to require improvement.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- Her Majesty's Inspector observed teaching, learning and assessment in eight lessons, on some occasions accompanied by the headteacher.
- A range of pupils' work was scrutinised, alongside information about their progress and attainment.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, groups of staff, the proprietor and senior leaders. The inspector met with some staff who had requested individual meetings.
- Her Majesty's Inspector spoke to pupils in lessons and met formally with two pupils.
- There were no contributions from parents to the online survey, Parent View. Her Majesty's Inspector spoke to one parent on the telephone. Nine staff returned the staff questionnaire and their responses were taken into account alongside other evidence.
- The school's documentation was scrutinised, including records relating to safeguarding and child protection, behavioural incidents, information about pupils' progress and attainment and papers relating to programmes of study and lesson planning.
- Her Majesty's Inspector checked the relevant policies and other documents to determine whether the school was meeting the independent school standards. She also toured the school, checked the premises and the school's records relating to fire safety.

## Inspection team

Janet Pearce, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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