

Alternative Centre of Education

First Floor 51 Market Square, Edmonton, London N9 0TZ

Inspection dates

31 October–2 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, who is the proprietor, has established a successful alternative provision for disengaged secondary pupils. She ensures that the school provides its pupils with a good and improving quality of education.
- The proprietor has ensured that the school is compliant with all the independent school standards.
- Pupils' behaviour improves during their time at the school. Members of staff work collaboratively to establish a nurturing and caring environment in which they support pupils, providing them with strategies to manage their feelings and behaviours. In this way, pupils learn to take responsibility for their actions, start to attend regularly and develop positive attitudes to learning. These changes help them to make good progress in their studies.
- Teachers make good use of assessment information to plan effective learning. Teachers and mentors provide extra support to pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, as well as to those falling behind in their work. As a result, pupils of all abilities make good progress from their starting points.
- The curriculum provides pupils with a good range of subjects to meet their academic needs and makes a good contribution to many aspects of their personal development. There is a particularly strong emphasis on teaching pupils how to stay safe. It is less effective, however, in its provision of enrichment activities to broaden pupils' experiences and in encouraging pupils to contribute to the wider community.
- At times, teachers' questioning does not challenge pupils enough to extend their knowledge and deepen their understanding. Occasionally, pupils fail to complete the work set by their teachers, which means pupils do not consistently make outstanding progress to reach the highest standards of which they are capable.
- Pupils leave the school well prepared to reintegrate into their former schools or to continue with post-16 education.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise outcomes further, by:
 - teachers asking challenging questions and deepening pupils' thinking
 - pupils consistently completing tasks that their teachers set.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by:
 - expanding the curriculum to include more enrichment activities to broaden pupils' experiences and enhance their learning
 - establishing opportunities for pupils to volunteer and contribute to the community.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher communicates a clear vision of wanting to help vulnerable pupils who have been unsuccessful in their former schools. The aim is to nurture the pupils so that they value learning, behave sensibly and are helped to reintegrate into mainstream schools or to continue to post-16 education. All members of staff are committed to delivering these goals. They meet these aims with much success.
- The headteacher has a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. She is keen to learn and ambitious to improve pastoral care, teaching and outcomes so that they become consistently of an even higher standard.
- The headteacher visits lessons and mentoring sessions every day. She often gives members of staff developmental feedback and advice to help them improve their practice. Members of staff are eager to learn and welcome her guidance. There is also a strong ethos of sharing best practice. As a result, teaching is good and improving. Combined with the strong pastoral support that helps pupils to behave and engage in learning, this ensures that pupils make good progress across the subjects.
- The curriculum provides a suitable range of courses. Leaders design individual learning plans to help pupils catch up, fill gaps in their previous learning, and make sure that they are prepared for successful reintegration into their former schools. Pupils who join in key stage 4 study a range of GCSE courses and/or functional skills that prepare them well for post-16 education and their career ambitions.
- The timetable devotes considerable time to small-group mentoring, and to personal, social, health, economic and citizenship education. Further, pupils study a course in preparing for work life. These provisions make a strong contribution to improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes, and preparing them for adult life in modern Britain. In addition, they raise pupils' awareness of and help them to learn to respect people who have protected characteristics.
- There are, however, limited opportunities for pupils to broaden their experiences and enrich their learning. Pupils do not have opportunities to volunteer and take responsibility to contribute to the wider community. This limits their overall personal development.

Governance

- The headteacher is the sole proprietor and there is no governing body. The proprietor is, therefore, responsible for all aspects of the school's work.
- The proprietor has ensured that the school meets the independent school standards and other requirements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Members of staff are vigilant and know that pupils are vulnerable to a range of possible safeguarding issues.
- Leaders have established an open and trusting environment. Pupils told the inspector that they feel that they can raise any concerns and worries, and know that members of staff

will take them seriously and help them. Members of staff have regular formal and frequent informal discussions about each of the pupils. They promptly report and share any concerns.

- The school's designated safeguarding leaders regularly liaise with their counterparts in the referring schools as well as a range of external agencies and parents to make sure that pupils are safe.
- There is a strong emphasis through the formal curriculum and during mentoring sessions on helping pupils to understand how to keep themselves safe from dangerous situations.
- The school publishes its safeguarding policy on its website. It has proper regard to current government requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is good and improving. It helps pupils make good progress from their varying starting points.
- Teachers assess pupils' skills, especially in English and mathematics, when they join the school. Teachers use this initial information, as well as the results of regular testing, to shape learning activities to meet the different needs of the pupils.
- Teachers prepare focused additional work for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This helps them to make good progress.
- Teachers and mentors, who support in-class, have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. As pupils settle into the school's routines and culture, they improve their behaviours and enjoy purposeful working relationships with the adults. As a result, pupils get on with their work and learn well. On occasion, a few pupils do not complete all the work that their teachers set. This limits their progress.
- Teachers set homework in accordance with the homework policy, and this helps pupils to revise and consolidate their learning.
- Teachers give pupils frequent feedback on how they are doing and what they need to do to improve. This helps pupils to learn from their mistakes and succeed in their learning.
- Teachers create a safe learning environment that gives pupils the confidence to express their views and contribute without fear of failure. Pupils know they can disagree with each other, but always in a respectful way.
- Teachers use questioning to check pupils' understanding. There are occasions when they accept answers that are basic or superficial. In those instances, teachers do not challenge or probe pupils with more difficult and thought-provoking questions. This limits pupils' opportunities for thinking hard and deepening their understanding.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Most pupils arrive at the school with low self-esteem. This is often because they were unsuccessful learners in their previous schools and displayed challenging, and sometimes

aggressive, behaviour. Because of the highly caring and nurturing environment in the school, pupils' behaviour transforms. As they put it, they become part of 'the family'. They learn to control their emotions, behave responsibly and value education. Pupils typically grow in confidence, want to succeed and aspire to pursue ambitious careers. One pupil, reiterating what others also told the inspector, said, 'I thought that I had no hope; now I feel that I am going to make it.'

- Leaders make sure that pupils have many opportunities to promote their physical and emotional well-being. All pupils benefit from sport and exercise, at least three times a week. Sessions include tae kwon do and boxing, which also help pupils develop self-discipline. During their frequent mentoring and group sessions, pupils discuss a wide range of issues and challenges that they face, such as body image and belief in themselves. These contribute well to supporting their mental and emotional health.
- There is a particularly strong emphasis on helping pupils understand how to avoid dangerous situations and stay safe. Pupils have recently completed a six-week course on internet safety. This included understanding how people might use the internet for grooming, for instance. Leaders used the opportunity for an in-depth discussion on how to stay safe from child sexual exploitation.
- Pupils have very few opportunities for enrichment activities and for contributing to the community. This limits some aspects of their cultural and social development.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- From the outset, the headteacher and members of staff make their expectations for good behaviour clear. With support and patience, adults help pupils to change their behaviours and take responsibility for their actions so that they settle down and start working hard.
- Pupils are proud of this school. They wear the uniform with pride and welcome visitors to 'the family'. They support newcomers and each other in improving their behaviours.
- Pupils develop positive attitudes to learning. As a result, they get on with their work and collaborate well with their teachers and peers. There are the odd occasions when pupils are disruptive. Mentors deal with these instances swiftly and effectively, so that learning can go ahead.
- Mentors often highlight to pupils that it is important to attend school regularly and on time. They explain that this will help them succeed in their education and future lives. Pupils respond positively. As a result, pupils generally attend more frequently than they did in their previous schools and overall attendance rates are higher than in similar schools nationally.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Generally, when pupils first enter the school they are working below the standards expected for their age. This is because they were unsuccessful in their previous schools. They typically had poor attendance and displayed challenging behaviour, which led to their exclusion. Pupils' academic progress is slow in the first stages of transition to this school and often they arrive with negative attitudes. Once pupils settle into their new

school environment, however, they learn to value their education, work hard and, as a result, make good progress across the range of subjects.

- The very few pupils who joined the school in Year 11 last year made strong progress in the short period leading up to the summer examinations. They achieved a good number of GCSE and other qualifications and continued on to post-16 education in mainstream schools. Inspection evidence confirms that the current Year 11 pupils have made good progress since joining this school. They, too, are on track to achieve well and continue into post-16 education.
- Pupils who join this alternative education provision for a fixed term make good progress. With the positive changes in their behaviours and their good academic progress, they reintegrate successfully into their referring schools.
- Pupils, including the most able, do not consistently reach the highest standards of which they are capable in their work, as teachers do not challenge them enough to think deeply.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress. This is because leaders make sure that they receive extra support, tailored to their needs.

School details

Unique reference number	143036
DfE registration number	308/6006
Inspection number	10035818

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	Alternative provision
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	18
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Alternative Centre of Education Ltd
Chair	Glendene Griffith
Headteacher	Glendene Griffith
Annual fees (day pupils)	£14,625
Telephone number	020 3793 5302
Website	http://altcentreofedu.ddns.net/
Email address	enquiries@altcentreofedu.ddns.net
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Alternative Centre of Education was awarded independent school status in September 2016 and this was the first standard inspection.
- This alternative provision is located in Edmonton, in the London Borough of Enfield, and is registered to educate up to 30 pupils.
- The school caters for disaffected young people with a history of disrupted schooling, mainly owing to behavioural and social difficulties. The pupils who attend the school have been referred by mainstream schools or by local authority virtual schools. Many pupils join at various points during the academic year. All of these pupils remain on roll at their

secondary or virtual schools.

- The school's aim is 'to empower young people, equipping them with the skills to overcome any barriers to learning allowing them to re-engage with their education. It aims to give young people the opportunity to develop the resilience and confidence they need to be successful'.
- The school does not use any other alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed learning in 13 lessons; some were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Samples of pupils' work were scrutinised. The inspector also checked the school's information about pupils' progress.
- The inspector spoke to the headteacher, teachers and mentors. There was also a formal discussion with three current pupils and various informal discussions with pupils during breaktimes and in lessons.
- The inspector took account of the seven responses to the questionnaire for staff. He could not take account of the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents (Parent View), as there was only one response.
- The inspector considered documentation, policies and all aspects of the school's work to check compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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