

# Active Support Education Centre

Unit 1 Britannia Estates, Leagrave Road, Luton, Bedfordshire LU3 1RJ

## Inspection dates

23–25 January 2018

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Active Support Education Centre transforms the life chances of pupils who previously have become disaffected with education.
- Two headteachers lead the school with a coherent vision and tenacity. They follow the principle that 'small changes make a big difference' in restoring the self-esteem and confidence of pupils attending the school.
- Staff are completely committed to the leaders' vision. Their well-considered words and actions ensure that pupils' self-belief in their ability to achieve is gradually re-established.
- Almost all pupils make good progress from their starting points, in a wide range of subjects.
- Behaviour is good. The school is a calm and well-ordered community.
- Leaders have ensured that a culture of safeguarding is a priority for the school. Staff understand well the need for early identification of any potential safeguarding issues. Pupils say they feel safe at school.
- Attendance is good, relative to pupils' starting points. Leaders take great care to track pupils' attendance and respond to absences. However, this information is not currently utilised to inform strategies that could improve the attendance of some individuals still further.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education offers many opportunities to help them understand how to keep safe. It also emphasises the importance of respecting the different views of others.
- The curriculum is broad and engaging. Flexible tasks and activities meet the learning needs of each individual, including those with education, health and care plans.
- Pupils' learning progresses well because of the high-quality individual attention they receive. However, a lack of confidence when writing slows progress for some. On occasion, teachers do not provide sufficient challenge to those who are most able, and this slows their progress.
- The proprietor and governors know the school well and challenge the headteachers to drive standards ever higher. They also offer wide-ranging support.

### 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?

- Further improve pupils' learning and raise their achievement by:
  - ensuring that teachers regularly encourage pupils to improve their extended writing skills
  - ensuring that teachers' planning consistently offers more opportunities for challenge, particularly for those who are most able.
- Further improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
  - making sure that leaders make strategic use of readily available attendance information, to ensure that the few pupils who come to school less often than they should, improve their attendance.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The joint headship of the school works very well. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities ensure that leadership is seamless and effective. Both headteachers clearly share a long-held, unwavering vision to re-engage pupils with their education whenever possible.
- The headteachers, supported well by the proprietor, have created a warm and welcoming school environment where the caring culture across the school is palpable. Staff know the pupils very well and care for them deeply. Consequently, pupils who have previously been disillusioned with their education begin to engage once more and make progress.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school and clear development plans are in place to address areas that they wish to improve still further. The aspiration is to provide an outstanding education for all pupils at the school.
- Leaders monitor pupils' progress, both emotional and academic, systematically to ensure that appropriate interventions support rapid improvement.
- Staff are supportive of the school vision and the school leadership. They strive to do the very best for the pupils. This is a harmonious school and the atmosphere of positivity supports pupils' well-being. Pupils begin to realise that they can manage their behaviour and succeed with their learning.
- Leaders ensure that staff receive regular training regarding all aspects of safeguarding.
- Leaders support continued improvements in the quality of teaching and learning through regular monitoring and support. Some staff have been encouraged to gain teaching and other appropriate professional qualifications to secure further improvements in learning for pupils. A peer review system is in place and this has provided evident improvements in the practice of a number of staff.
- Leaders promote equality and diversity well. There is a clear plan in place that offers accessibility to the curriculum within the school. Girls attending the school, although few in number, are clear that they have the same opportunities as the boys.
- Senior and middle leaders make sure that there are good-quality curriculum plans in place. All pupils have a personalised learning plan, which takes full account of their starting points. A wide range of academic, vocational, aesthetic, creative and 'life skills' opportunities are available. Some pupils take GCSE qualifications, depending on aptitude and ability. The curriculum is re-evaluated each year to support the needs of current learners and their aspirations.
- Leaders have established a therapeutic inclusion unit that supports pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans who have been unable to thrive in a mainstream setting. This unit meets the complex needs of pupils through a carefully designed curriculum, which supports emotional development and consequently academic progress.
- Opportunities to take part in sporting activities with mainstream schools, such as football and badminton enriches the curriculum. The newly established gym in the school offers opportunities for kickboxing, spinning and improving fitness. The school also organises visits to outside activity centres, for example trampolining. Pupils regularly engage in

charity work and raise money for a number of national and local community charities.

- Placing schools, who use the centre to provide alternative provision and the placing local authority, praise the leadership for the 'unbelievable support' that the school gives pupils. This includes 'the wonderful job that they do; returning pupils to mainstream education'.
- At the start of the inspection, some important policies and documents did not reflect current statutory requirements. However, leaders ensured that these were all compliant by the end of the inspection.

## **Governance**

- The proprietor and management committee, which includes the company's directors, form an effective governing body.
- There is a depth of educational experience available among the governing body, which the school can draw upon. Governors are passionate about providing outstanding provision for pupils for whom mainstream education has not suited their needs.
- There is no sense of complacency and governors are fully involved in the detailed improvement plans, based upon reflective and accurate self-evaluation. The proprietor visits the school regularly to review provision and offer challenge to the headteachers. It is an open relationship; leaders respond well to this challenge and receive wholehearted support.
- The proprietor is aware of his responsibilities regarding safeguarding. The proprietor reviews safeguarding documents including child protection files regularly to ensure that these are compliant. He understands that vigilance is required to ensure that the independent school standards are consistently met.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- A comprehensive safeguarding policy, available on the school's website, underpins the strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Leaders are fully aware of their responsibilities for pupils in their care. They have a comprehensive awareness of 'local threats' and these can be significant for some pupils.
- Leaders work tirelessly to keep pupils safe and provide a high level of supervision. Pupils say that they feel safe in school.
- Staff discharge their safeguarding responsibilities very well and all understand the critical importance of early help. Lines of communication to pass on any safeguarding issues are clear. Staff training is comprehensive and includes the 'Prevent' duty, drug use, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, gang culture and sexual exploitation. The school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Monitoring non-attendance is key to the safeguarding systems in the school. The school has rightly identified absence as a 'red flag' in terms of potential child protection issues. A culture of vigilance ensures that appropriate external agencies are contacted immediately if there are any concerns.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Classroom relationships are strong and there is a nurturing and supportive tone to lessons. Routines are well defined and this helps to maintain a sense of security and order for pupils through the day.
- Teachers pay careful attention to the needs identified in education, health and care (EHC) plans and pupils' starting points from baseline assessments when planning learning. Teachers review the progress that pupils make against their curriculum plans. Records of progress are evident in pupil planners at the end of each day. Staff provide helpful feedback to pupils, both verbal and written, which secures further progress.
- Staff use skilful and well-rehearsed strategies to manage behaviour, based on an impressive understanding of each pupil. They set clear boundaries for pupils, following the school code of conduct, and this maintains a focus on learning in the classroom.
- Questioning is typically a strength of teaching in the school. Teachers identify misconceptions and phrase questions that encourage pupils to reconsider and justify their answers. This improves pupil's confidence and self-belief as their understanding of a topic deepens.
- On occasion, teachers do not plan to provide challenge for the most able pupils. Consequently, they do not make as much progress as they could.
- Teachers use a variety of strategies and resources well to engage pupils. Almost all pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. However, they do not readily record their knowledge and understanding in extended writing as a matter of routine. Teachers support and coax but some pupils remain reluctant to write; consequently, their books show that this skill is underdeveloped.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge and this allows them to adapt activities and tasks when needed to meet pupils' needs and interests. Teachers are energetic, encouraging and cheerful, which ensures that pupils feel that any progress they make is valued. The individual attention that pupils receive in the classroom ensures that any misunderstandings are speedily rectified.
- The development of ideas about 'right and wrong' in society and debates concerning moral dilemmas are a frequent feature in lessons, for example 'Should footballers be paid more than doctors?' and 'Is taking drugs always wrong?' This helps pupils to develop reasoning skills and an understanding of British values.
- Teachers are quick to challenge the very rare use of any inappropriate or derogatory language.
- Teachers report to parents and carers on a termly basis. Depending on arrangements agreed with parents during registration meetings, this could be as often as weekly. Parents say that they value these reports and that the information regarding both the academic and the social and emotional progress that pupils are making 'is very helpful'.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.

- Many pupils enter the school anxious about re-entering an educational environment after long periods away from school. The school builds up their confidence and trust in small steps, until they are ready once more to learn and communicate positively with others.
- A number of professionals are involved in supporting careers advice, including a member of staff in the school. Pupils understand the various options available to them, including apprenticeships and the possibility of attending university in the future. The school arranges visits to a range of colleges and ensures that pupils are well informed to make an appropriate choice. Pupils say that they are given good careers support to help them make their next steps.
- The registration and admissions procedure underpins the process of enticing pupils back into education. Before joining the school, senior leaders meet with the pupil, parents or carers and outside commissioning agencies, to identify the learning and support needs of the pupil. Pupils' views and aspirations play an important role in determining their curriculum offer.
- All pupils have a key worker in school whom they can talk to. Pupils say that they always have an adult to turn to if they have a problem. They are confident that bullying is rare in the school, including homophobic bullying. Pupils can explain what to do should it occur. There is a clear acceptance of those from other faiths and cultures.
- There is a comprehensive personal, social, health and economic education programme in place. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They are clear about the dangers of the internet, extremism, gang culture, knife crime and the use of drugs. The school promotes positive attitude to health, both physically and mentally, as an integral part of daily life in the school. Pupils experience the democratic process through voting in the house leader elections.
- Pupils value the education that the school provides and most attend very well, including those with EHC plans. Others make significant improvements in their attendance once they start at the school. As one pupil said, 'The best thing about school here is learning.'
- Pupils feel safe and are appreciative of the support they are given. Pupils say that the 'school has changed their lives' and that they now feel they can achieve more in the future.
- Parents commented positively about the work of the school, saying that pupils had regained their 'love of learning' and that 'staff go the extra mile to help pupils with difficulties'.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- A number of pupils arrive at the school with a history of challenging behaviour. The school provides a clear framework and structure for pupils to follow. Pupils respond quickly to this and behaviour seen around the school and in lessons is good.
- Pupils behave well at break and lunchtime. They are polite, hold doors open and are usually respectful to visitors, adults and each other.
- Adults are able to divert any emerging poor behaviour swiftly and expertly. All staff display patience and a calm approach. However, through a reasoned conversation they

leave the pupils in no doubt as to what is acceptable behaviour and what is not.

- The school keeps a record of any serious incidents and reviews these regularly.
- Teachers encourage pupils to work towards a variety of rewards and monitor pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning each day. This works well and pupils view the system positively.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

**Good**

- Pupils arrive at the school with a wide range of complex needs and starting points. A number have not been engaged in education for several months and have a history of disrupted attendance at a number of schools.
- From these low starting points, the high aspiration for pupils is that 'all pupils leave with nationally recognised qualifications'. The majority of pupils make the accelerated progress required to meet this expectation, including those on EHC plans.
- Pupils are encouraged to take unit qualifications regularly in small steps, so that whenever they leave the school they have evidence of progression, especially in mathematics and English. Results from 2017 indicate that almost all pupils entered for these unit awards achieved a successful outcome in the context of their individual starting points, especially in mathematics.
- The most able pupils are encouraged to take GCSE examinations in English, mathematics, physical education and biology. Almost all of those entered in 2017 achieved a pass.
- A review of current progress shows that many pupils have already attained a range of nationally recognised qualifications and some are on track to take GCSEs in the summer of 2018.
- The overriding objective of the school is to re-engage pupils with education so that they can return to mainstream school. More than two thirds of pupils last year were reintegrated into mainstream education. Other destinations for pupils included college, apprenticeships or employment at an appropriate level.

## School details

Unique reference number	142672
DfE registration number	821/6013
Inspection number	10043522

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	9 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	66
Number of part-time pupils	43
Proprietor	Active Support Education Centre
Chair	Sujel Miah
Headteachers (Directors)	Matthew Ford Shahed Koyes
Annual fees (day pupils)	£19,300–38,000
Telephone number	01582 256040
Website	<a href="http://www.activesupportededucation.co.uk">www.activesupportededucation.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:matt@activesupportededucation.co.uk">matt@activesupportededucation.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Active Support Education Centre is an independent special school in Luton.
- The school is based on two units in an industrial estate. Since the pre-registration inspection in January 2017, the school moved from Unit 9 to Unit 3 last September. Unit 1 remains the registered address. The Department for Education has approved the move.
- The detail in the report applies to both sites.
- The school provides an alternative provision for pupils who either have been excluded from school or are at risk of exclusion from school. Some have an education, health and



care plan. The school provides both full-time and part-time education and works with a number of schools nearby and the local authority. Pupils' part-time and full-time provision is agreed with the placing authority and placing schools.

- The school is registered with the Department for Education to admit up to 100 pupils aged between 9 to 16 years.
- Pupils are admitted at various times during the year. Some stay until the end of Year 11, but many are reintegrated back into mainstream schools.
- Most pupils experience behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. They have experienced long periods out of education and this has had an impact on their academic achievement. The school also runs a small therapeutic unit on site for those pupils with the most challenging needs.
- Some of the pupils are looked after by the local authority.
- This is the first standard inspection of the school.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited parts of a range of lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work over time.
- The inspector examined the school's information about the progress that pupils are making, including the destinations of pupils who had left in the previous school year.
- The inspector held discussions with pupils, the proprietor and a member of the management committee, the headteachers, middle leaders and teachers. The inspector also spoke to a placing local authority representative and two senior leaders from placing schools, about the school and its work with the children from their area.
- There were 25 responses to the staff questionnaire and these were scrutinised by the inspector.
- There were two contributions from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. However, the inspector was able to talk to three parents by telephone.
- The inspector scrutinised a number of school policies, procedures and records in order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards. This included the school's policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils.
- The inspector viewed the school premises and accommodation on both sites.

## Inspection team

Kay Leach, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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