

Epic Learning

Golborne Youth Centre, 2a Wornington Road, Swinbrook Estate, London W10 5QJ

Inspection dates

20–22 February 2018

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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and the proprietor have ensured that all the independent school standards are met and the school continues to improve.
- Governors are knowledgeable and skilful. They know the school well and support and challenge leaders effectively.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers know the pupils very well and plan learning carefully to meet their needs. Consequently, pupils make good progress during their time in school.
- There is strong support for leadership from staff. Morale among the staff is high.
- Pupils' personal development, welfare and behaviour are good. Pupils interact well with each other and adults and show positive attitudes to learning. The school environment is calm and orderly.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Pupils are taught about British values and are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils feel safe and well cared for in school. They are taught how to keep themselves safe from a range of potential risks.
- Pupils receive good advice and guidance on careers options, which prepare them well for their next steps.
- There are strong links with parents and carers. Leaders work effectively with external agencies to support pupils and their families.
- The curriculum is broad and is designed well to meet the needs of pupils. However, there is insufficient emphasis on improving pupils' skills in reading to help them become more confident readers.
- On occasion, pupils are not given time to complete their work and consolidate their learning.
- Pupils have limited access to information and communication technology (ICT) to support their learning further.
- Teachers' expectations of the presentation of pupils' work are not consistently high.
- The school improvement plan lacks clear timescales for actions to tackle identified weaknesses.
- Leaders have not ensured that the school's marking and feedback policy is effectively implemented.

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?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - pupils have more opportunities to read a range of texts to improve their confidence and progress in reading
 - pupils have time to complete their work and consolidate their knowledge and understanding
 - pupils have greater access to ICT to support their learning
 - teachers have consistently high expectations of the presentation of pupils' work.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the school improvement plan has clear timescales so that any weaknesses are tackled swiftly
 - the school's marking and feedback policy is consistently applied.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- School leaders, governors and the proprietor work effectively as a team to drive improvements. They ensure that all of the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders, including governors, have ensured that the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection are fully and successfully addressed.
- The executive principal, who is ably supported by the head of school, has high expectations of pupils and their outcomes. Leaders have successfully created a culture of respect, tolerance and harmony. There are positive relationships between staff and pupils. Staff are supportive of leadership and their morale is high.
- There are effective systems in place for teachers and leaders to track pupils' progress, including their personal development and welfare. Those pupils who are struggling or falling behind are provided with timely and effective support to ensure that their needs are met and that they achieve well.
- Regular meetings between leaders and staff are used well to adapt the support and provision for pupils and improve their learning experiences.
- Teachers are provided with effective support and training to improve their classroom practice. The arrangements for performance management have improved since the previous inspection. Teaching is monitored closely and teachers are set improvement targets. Teachers can check their own progress against these targets online, and said that they find this new system helpful.
- The curriculum is broad, engaging and takes into account the needs of pupils. The curriculum is enriched by trips, residential visits, kayaking and boxing. Pupils can also enter for a bronze or silver arts award. There is a good focus on developing pupils' skills, including their skills in literacy and numeracy. However, insufficient emphasis is given to the improvement of reading skills.
- British values are actively promoted. Pupils learn about respect, rights and responsibilities. They know about democracy and the rule of law. The youth forum provides pupils with opportunities to learn about issues to do with citizenship, equality and discrimination. Pupils visit the royal courts of justice to widen their understanding of law, human rights and the justice system.
- The school marks different events to promote pupils' appreciation of and respect for diversity in British society, including cultural and religious diversity. For example, pupils are involved in Black History Month, International Women's Day, Armistice Day and International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Pupils show respect for people with protected characteristics.
- The school effectively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- There is close and regular communication with parents. Parents are provided with frequent information on their child's progress. Additionally, leaders have plans to carry out periodic surveys of views of parents to address any emerging issues or concerns.
- The school improvement plan identifies the right priorities for the school. However, it

lacks clear timescales for the actions to be taken to address identified weaknesses.

- Leaders have not ensured that the school's marking and feedback policy is consistently applied.

Governance

- Governance is effective. Governors are trained well and have the right skills and expertise to perform their roles effectively. They provide senior leaders with good support and challenge to ensure continuous improvement. They work closely with senior leaders and visit the school regularly. Consequently, they know the school well, including its strengths and areas for improvement.
- The proprietor works effectively with leaders and governors. In this way, the proprietor ensures that all of the independent school standards are met and the school continues to improve. The proprietor ensures that the school buildings are fit for purpose.
- Governors ensure that pupils' welfare and safety are always a high priority for leaders and staff. They ensure that they complete appropriate training in relation to safeguarding to keep pupils safe.
- Governors carry out the performance management of the headteacher effectively, setting challenging targets, including on pupils' outcomes and the school's aims.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that there is a strong culture of vigilance and that welfare and safety of pupils is everyone's responsibility.
- The safeguarding policy is available on the school's website and reflects the government's latest guidance.
- Leaders ensure that all staff receive training and are regularly updated on safeguarding and child protection procedures. Consequently, staff know the signs to look for that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Staff know what they need to do if they have any concerns about pupils' safety and well-being.
- The proprietor and leaders ensure that appropriate checks on all adults working at the school are carried out thoroughly. They ensure that records on safeguarding are detailed and fit for purpose.
- Health and safety checks and risk assessments are carried out appropriately. This ensures that pupils are kept safe in school and when on visits out of school.
- The school works effectively with a range of other professionals, including the local authority, to help keep pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has been maintained since the previous inspection. Teaching is improving and leaders ensure that teachers have further opportunities to enhance their classroom skills.
- There are strong working relationships between staff and pupils. Staff know individual

pupils really well, including their needs and backgrounds. Teachers use assessment information well to plan activities which engage pupils in their learning and ensure their good progress.

- Teachers make good use of questioning to test and reinforce pupils' understanding. Staff encourage pupils to contribute to discussion and routinely build on their vocabulary and language skills.
- Teaching assistants know the pupils well and provide them with effective support, both in the classroom and on a one-to-one basis.
- Teachers use their subject knowledge well to develop and extend pupils' learning. In science, for example, the teaching was effective in helping pupils to make progress with their understanding of global warming. Pupils considered the different views of scientists on global warming and the difference between climate and weather.
- In mathematics, pupils are given challenging work. They use their knowledge well to solve a range of problems. For example, pupils successfully tackled quadratic equations and drew quadratic and cubic graphs. Pupils said that they enjoy mathematics.
- Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their work to deepen their understanding. For example, in English pupils considered how to improve their writing skills, with strong support from the teacher.
- The teaching of art is successful and pupils enjoy art lessons. For example, pupils used 3D shapes and different shades of paint to represent rich and poor areas in London. They used the tragedy of Grenfell Tower to illustrate the theme of poverty and inequality in the British society.
- Insufficient emphasis is given to the teaching of reading. Some pupils lack confidence to read aloud in lessons and do not have the strategies to read unfamiliar or difficult words. The range and quality of books to capture pupils' interest and promote their love for reading is limited.
- Some pupils do not take enough care with the presentation of their work, which is sometimes poor. Teachers do not routinely insist that pupils present their work well or comment on how it could be improved.
- Teachers do not consistently ensure that pupils complete their work. This leaves gaps in their knowledge and understanding and slows their progress.
- Opportunities to use ICT to support and extend their learning are limited.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are polite and friendly and show good attitudes to learning. They respect adults and each other.
- Pupils said that bullying, racism, sexism or homophobia are not issues in the school.
- Staff provide high levels of individual support to pupils to enhance their confidence and self-esteem. Staff work very closely with external agencies, including the local authority,

to keep pupils safe and promote their well-being.

- The school also has access to wider Epic services to provide further support on any issues to do with pupils' safety and welfare.
- Pupils said that they feel safe. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. They know about the dangers associated with cyber bullying, radicalisation, extremism and being part of a gang.
- Leaders ensure that risk assessments are carried out appropriately to keep pupils safe. They take effective action to reduce any potential risks, both within the school premises and during off-site visits.
- Every pupil has a key worker to promote their emotional, mental health and welfare, and to help them achieve well. Pupils also have a regular access to a counsellor who, they said, 'listens to them and helps them sort things out'.
- Leaders ensure that pupils receive good, impartial careers guidance. This helps them to make informed decisions about their next stage of education, employment or training.
- Pupils are taught how and why to live healthy and positive lives, with emphasis on their physical and emotional well-being. Pupils are also taught about sex and relationships.
- There is a yearly residential trip for pupils to increase their confidence and self-esteem, and to develop their skills in teamwork.
- Pupils work is sometimes poorly presented. A few do not bring the right equipment to school, so learning time is lost.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils said that behaviour is typically good in school and that they all get on well with each other. Behaviour logs confirm that behaviour is improving.
- Pupils conduct themselves well throughout the day. They have good attitudes to learning and disruption in lessons is rare.
- It is not possible to analyse attendance over time because of small number of pupils and changes in cohorts of pupils over a short period of time. Although pupils arrive at school with records of poor attendance, this improves for almost all pupils during their time at the school. Attendance is also affected by the learning and emotional issues faced by most pupils. The school's good links with parents, social workers and the local authority's 'early help' services is improving attendance and reducing persistent absence.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils continue to make good progress across the curriculum as a result of the good quality of teaching they receive. This is confirmed by the school's own records and work in pupils' books.
- Most of the pupils face multiple barriers to learning. All pupils are from disadvantaged backgrounds and have a range of health issues or behavioural, emotional or social difficulties. There are very small numbers of pupils who are regarded as the most able.

- Pupils' attainment on entry is low. Most have had a poor, often disrupted, experience of previous education before they joined Epic Learning. All pupils are at risk of not moving on to employment, education or training.
- Most pupils are only in the school for a short time and many enter and leave the school other than at normal times. These pupils generally make good progress from their starting points. For many, attainment remains low, especially that of pupils who start late in the year or have missed learning prior to joining the school.
- Pupils study national curriculum subjects that lead to GCSE and functional skills qualifications, together with art and physical education. Boxing, which is enjoyed by both boys and girls, is in the process of being accredited.
- The cohorts of pupils leaving school are too small to make any meaningful judgements on overall patterns of attainment. However, the school prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education. In 2017, all pupils in Years 11 and above achieved a qualification. Most pupils achieved a GCSE grade, including in English, mathematics and science. Most pupils also gained passes in functional skills in reading and writing. Nearly all pupils progressed to either employment, education or training. Most of the pupils went on to work towards qualifications in a further education establishment.
- There is a strong careers education information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) programme for pupils. The Epic Learning staff work closely with the CEIAG team, and support pupils with their college and sixth-form applications.
- The school celebrates pupils' achievement, including their attendance, by holding a graduation day at the end of each year. External, high-profile people are invited to the school to give motivational and inspirational talks to pupils.

School details

Unique reference number	140225
DfE registration number	207/6007
Inspection number	10035812

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 school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	13 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	12
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Brendan O'Keefe
Chair	Mary Mackle
Executive principal	Vicki Harrison-Carr
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,000–20,000
Telephone number	020 8968 8936
Website	www.epiccic.org.uk
Email address	epic.learning@epiccic.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–6 June 2014

Information about this school

- Epic Learning provides day places for up to 60 boys and girls aged from 13 to 18 as part of the alternative provision for education within the Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. There are currently 12 pupils on roll, mainly in Years 10 and 11, and a few in Year 12. A small minority of pupils have an education, health and care plan. The school does not have a sixth form.
- All pupils are from disadvantaged backgrounds and have special educational needs related to social, emotional and mental health difficulties. There are very few most-able pupils.

- The school is run by an employee-led social enterprise company, Epic CIC, which was previously part of the school engagement programme in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. It is based in a council-owned multi-use centre that is also a youth and community centre out of school hours.
- The school's aim is to improve behaviour, raise achievement, promote greater inclusion and reduce the risk of fixed-term and permanent exclusions. Students are dual-registered, remaining on the register of their mainstream school while attending the centre on a full-time basis until they are ready to return to mainstream learning, college or employment.
- There are five teachers who are responsible for their subjects: English, mathematics, science, religious education and personal, social and health education. There is also a part-time teacher of art. The mathematics teacher is also the head of school.
- By the end of the inspection, the school met the statutory requirements for the publication of information on its website.
- The school's last full standard inspection was in June 2014.
- A material change inspection took place in September 2016. This material change inspection was commissioned because the school relocated its premises from Golborne Youth and Community Centre in the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to Epic Lancaster Centre in July 2016. The relocation of the school site to new premises was a result of health and safety concerns relating to flooding of the existing building. In that inspection, the school met all the independent school standards relevant to the material change.
- The school remained at its new premises for the academic year 2016/17. The school returned to its current premises at Golborne Youth and Community Centre for the academic year 2017/18.
- The school uses no alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This full standard inspection took place with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning in all subjects. All were joint observations with either the executive principal or the head of school.
- The inspector held a meeting with pupils in Years 10, 11 and 12 to discuss their learning and views about the school. The inspector also heard pupils in Years 10 and 12 read and discussed their reading with them.
- The inspector checked the work in pupils' books and the school's own information on pupils' progress. The inspector scrutinised the school's pre-employment checks on staff, and looked at pupils' attendance and behaviour records. The inspector also examined policies and documents in relation to the independent school standards, including information on safety and safeguarding.
- The inspector met with the executive principal, head of school, teachers, operations manager, business facility manager, governors and the proprietor.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- The inspector considered six responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Avtar Sherri, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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