

Focus 1st Academy

339 Bowes Road, New Southgate, London N11 1BA

Inspection dates

12 to 14 March 2019

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met, and the school continues to improve.
- The headteacher, who is also the proprietor, provides strong leadership and works effectively with leaders and staff to bring about improvements.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers know pupils well, and there are strong working relationships between them. Teachers plan learning to meet the needs of pupils. Consequently, pupils make good progress during their time in school. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Pupils' personal development, welfare and behaviour are good. Pupils are provided with strong care, guidance and support. Pupils gain self-confidence and show positive attitudes to learning. Their attendance is significantly better than in their previous schools.
- Pupils are kept safe and feel safe. They are taught well about how to keep themselves safe from a range of unsafe situations and potential risks. There are strong links with parents and careers and external agencies to keep pupils safe.
- The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of pupils so that they achieve well. It provides them with opportunities to study for vocational and academic GCSE courses.
- Pupils show respect for cultural diversity and people from different backgrounds. They are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- The school is effective in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Sometimes, time is not managed effectively and lessons finish abruptly. Consequently, pupils are unsure how their learning concludes, leaving some gaps in their learning.
- Pupils are sometimes not provided with feedback to improve their work, in accordance with the school's policy. Consequently, any misconceptions and mistakes are not routinely picked up.
- Planning for improvement is not sharply focused and lacks clear timescales for actions.
- The systems for challenging leaders and holding them to account for the work they do are not sufficiently developed.

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 time is managed effectively and lessons do not finish abruptly without consolidating pupils' learning.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the school's policy on giving feedback to pupils on how they can improve their work is consistently followed
 - planning for improvement is sharply focused, and that it gives clear timescales for actions
 - clear arrangements are in place to challenge and hold senior leaders to account for the work they do to bring about improvements.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met. They have addressed the main weaknesses identified in the previous inspection.
- Leaders and staff have created a caring, supportive and welcoming environment for pupils, all of whom arrive disaffected. Many have been permanently excluded. There are positive relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils feel valued and respected. This has a positive impact on pupils' self-esteem and attitudes to learning, and to their aspirations. As a result, they re-engage in education.
- The headteacher checks the quality of teaching and learning frequently, and provides feedback to teachers to help them improve. Leaders and teachers meet regularly to share and discuss effective classroom practice. Teachers are provided with support and training to ensure continuous improvement in the quality of teaching.
- Leaders and teachers check the progress of pupils closely. Any pupils falling behind in their work are provided with additional support to address their learning needs and gaps in their understanding. This ensures that pupils make good progress. Pupils' progress information is regularly shared with parents.
- There are strong links and working relationships with local authorities whose schools refer pupils to this school. For example, the local authority officer for the local authority in which the school is located visits the school regularly to discuss pupils' progress, welfare and safety. Pupils who spoke to the inspector said that they enjoy their learning and that the school was 'making a difference' for them.
- The curriculum engages pupils and meets their needs. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' skills, including their skills in literacy and numeracy. Since the previous inspection, GCSE courses in chemistry, physics and biology have been introduced to broaden the curriculum. There is an increasing emphasis on teaching GCSE subjects, and this particularly meets the needs of the most able pupils. There are vocational courses in information and communication technology (ICT), and in preparing for working life and non-accredited courses in music technology and sports. Pupils enjoy football competitions with other schools. During the inspection, a professional rapper worked with pupils on mixing music and creating positive rap lyrics about aspirations. Pupils develop the required skills to continue to further education, training or employment.
- British values are promoted well. Pupils learn about rights and responsibilities, and about respecting others. They know about democracy, elections and the rule of law. They have workshops on British values and talks from a local member of parliament.
- Pupils show an appreciation of and respect for the diversity represented in British society, including cultural and religious diversity. 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.
- Leaders have not ensured that the school's policy on providing pupils with feedback on how to improve their work is consistently applied.
- The process of development planning for the school's future lacks sharpness and clear

timescales for actions.

- Arrangements for challenging and holding leaders to account for the work they do are not sufficiently developed.

Governance

- There is no governing body. The headteacher is the sole proprietor and takes on the main responsibility for managing and leading on all aspects of the school's work.
- The proprietor knows the school well, including its main strengths and areas for improvement. The proprietor ensures that the school continues to improve and that all the independent school standards are met.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff have received up-to-date training on safeguarding, including on the guidance in 'Keeping children safe in education', September 2018. The school's safeguarding policy reflects the latest statutory guidance, and it is published on the school's website.
- There is a strong culture of vigilance to keep pupils safe, including from extremism and radicalisation. Staff know the signs to look for to indicate that a pupil may be at potential risk of harm. Staff know what they need to do if they have any concerns about pupils' safety and welfare.
- Leaders and staff work closely with parents, external agencies and local authorities to ensure that all pupils are kept safe. They ensure that safeguarding records and risk assessments are fit for purpose. Relevant pre-employment checks are carried out for all adults.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has been maintained since the previous inspection, and it is good. Pupils make good progress across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, because they are well taught and supported.
- There are strong relationships between teachers and pupils. Teachers know the pupils well. They make good use of pupils' records from previous schools to establish pupils' starting points. Teachers use this information effectively for assessment and planning to meet pupils' learning needs. Those falling behind are identified quickly, and they are provided with strong support. In this way, leaders and staff ensure that there are equal opportunities for all pupils to help them to overcome any barriers to their learning.
- The most able pupils are provided with challenging tasks to help them think hard about their learning and extend their understanding. This was seen, for example, in a mathematics lesson where a pupil was set challenging work on solving trigonometry problems. There is a good emphasis on everyday mathematics to provide pupils with the monetary skills they need in their daily lives.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use questioning well to test pupils' understanding and reinforce learning. This engages pupils well in their learning.
- In English, there is good emphasis on building pupils' vocabulary and testing their

understanding of the meaning behind words. For example, in an English lesson, pupils read the book 'An Inspector Calls', and they considered what kind of text they were reading and the meaning of 'class'.

- Pupils receive specialist teaching in music. In a music lesson, the teacher tested pupils' understanding of 'tempo' and 'melody', and used technology well to demonstrate the difference between the two terms. The learning was brought to life when a professional visiting musician rapped to a melody. Pupils had the opportunity to produce their own beats.
- Occasionally, when pupils lose concentration, teachers skilfully re-engage pupils in their learning, and they restore a calm and positive learning environment.
- Pupils who spoke to the inspector said that teaching is good and that they make good progress.
- Sometimes, teachers do not apply the school's feedback policy consistently to ensure that pupils understand how to improve their work. Consequently, some pupils continue to make the same mistakes in their work.
- Sometimes, time is not managed effectively and lessons finish abruptly. As a result, pupils are unsure how their learning concludes. This leaves some gaps in their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- Leaders' work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils arrive at the school with unsuccessful experiences of their previous schools, and they often have low levels of self-esteem and confidence. They receive good care, support and guidance from staff, and they are helped to overcome barriers to their learning. Consequently, their confidence grows and they re-engage with education and make good progress.
- Leaders work closely with parents and a range of agencies, including the local authority, to promote the welfare of pupils and ensure that they are safe.
- Pupils said that bullying, racism, sexism or homophobia are not an issue in the school. They said that behaviour is good and that 'they get on well with staff and each other'.
- Pupils are taught well about how to keep safe. They benefit from talks on safety given by the police, fire brigade and ambulance service. In their ICT lessons, pupils learn about internet safety and different types of bullying. Pupils have received a workshop on the 'Prevent' duty. Pupils learn about knife crime and the dangers associated with carrying knives and being in gangs.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online. They understand the dangers associated with cyberbullying, extremist views and radicalisation. Pupils said that they feel safe at school. They said that if they have any concerns about their safety, a member of staff would deal with it.
- Pupils know about healthy eating and how to lead healthy lives. For example, in the physical education theory lesson, pupils learned about the dangers linked with smoking, taking drugs and alcohol. They learned about the importance of physical fitness, and its

impact on well-being. Pupils have access to a range of sporting activities to keep themselves fit.

- Pupils receive effective careers advice to help them make informed decisions about the careers they want to pursue. In a lesson on preparing for life at work, pupils gained the skills required to complete their curriculum vitae and prepare for interviews. Outside speakers visit the school to give pupils talks about careers. Pupils also make visits to open days, which cover a range of career opportunities.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils said that behaviour is typically good. They know about the school's behaviour policy, including the system for rewards and sanctions.
- Pupils often come to the school having experienced poor behaviour in their previous schools. However, pupils' behaviour improves quickly once they join the school.
- Pupils typically start the school having had periods of prolonged absence in their previous schools. Once pupils arrive and settle into the school, their attendance rates improve markedly.
- Pupils' attendance and punctuality have improved since the previous inspection. Staff work closely with parents, pupils and the local authorities to improve attendance and punctuality. Pupils are sent text messages if they are late, and sanctions are made clear to them. Leaders ensure there are no safeguarding issues in relation to pupils' attendance through close working relationships with parents and the local authorities.
- Leaders are aware that there is more to be done to improve pupils' punctuality. Pupils are allowed to go out of school at breaktimes and lunchtimes. However, some pupils are late back to school, and learning time is lost. Leaders have recently decided to remove morning break from the timetable so that learning is uninterrupted.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' attainment on entry is very low. Some pupils enter school other than at normal times. Most pupils face multiple barriers to learning and are at risk of not moving on to employment, education or training.
- Pupils make good progress in a range of subjects, including in English and mathematics. For some pupils, attainment remains low, especially for those who have missed long periods of learning prior to joining the school.
- Pupils gain qualifications in functional skills in English and mathematics, and vocational accreditation in ICT and preparing for work. Leaders have plans to include accreditation in music.
- The most able pupils are set challenging work, and they are expected to take GCSE examinations, including in English, mathematics, science and physical education.
- Pupils have good opportunities to read in lessons, and the very large majority of pupils read well. They have access to good-quality texts, and they develop their confidence in reading aloud.

- The school prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education. In 2018, all pupils who left this alternative provision at the end of Year 11 went on to study at further education colleges.

School details

Unique reference number	141247
DfE registration number	308/6003
Inspection number	10092910

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	14 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	25
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Marina Savva
Headteacher	Marina Savva
Annual fees (day pupils)	£9,500
Telephone number	020 8361 5658
Website	www.focus1stacademy.org.uk
Email address	marina@focustraining.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 to 14 September 2017

Information about this school

- Focus 1st Academy was set up in 2000 to provide education and training. It was awarded independent school status in August 2014.
- This alternative provision is located in Arnos Grove, in the London borough of Enfield, and it is registered to educate up to 25 pupils.
- The school caters for disaffected young people with a history of disrupted schooling, including those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Five different north London local authorities have referred the pupils who attend the school. Many pupils join at various points during the academic year. All pupils remain on roll at their secondary school.
- The school's aim is 'to empower students to become effective learners and experience

success'.

- There are no pupils who have education, health and care plans.
- The school has no religious affiliation.
- The school does not use any off-site provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- Learning was observed jointly with the headteacher in all subjects.
- The inspector held a meeting with eight pupils to discuss their learning and views about the school. There were also some informal discussions with pupils during the school day.
- Discussions took place with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the head of curriculum and staff. The inspector also held a telephone discussion with the local authority's leader for alternative provision.
- The inspector checked the school's welfare and health and safety arrangements and toured the school's premises. All the relevant independent school standards were checked.
- The inspector checked the work in pupils' books. The inspector scrutinised the school's pre-employment checks on staff, and looked at pupils' attendance, punctuality and behaviour records. The inspector also examined school policies and documents in relation to the independent school standards, including information on safety and safeguarding.
- There were no responses to either the Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Parent View or to pupils' and staff's surveys.

Inspection team

Avtar Sherri, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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