

# The Education Centre

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

## Inspection dates

19–21 March 2019

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- While there is some improvement in this school, leaders have not ensured that all the recommendations from the last inspection to improve the quality of teaching have been acted upon.
- Leaders' plans to improve the school are not focused sharply enough. They do not monitor the success of their actions sufficiently well.
- As in the last inspection, teachers do not know pupils' learning needs precisely enough. Consequently, pupils do not get exactly the help that they need to overcome learning difficulties.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' academic progress are not high enough. Pupils do not make enough progress in reading and writing.
- Although the new proprietor regularly visits the school, governors have yet to call leaders to account for the attendance and progress of pupils.
- Leaders have not set targets for staff or provided them with helpful enough feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of their practice.

### The school has the following strengths

- The new principal is highly regarded by parents and carers, pupils and staff.
- Leaders have improved the school recently. For example, they have ensured that all the independent school standards are met and all statutory requirements for safeguarding are in place.
- Staff ensure that there is a welcoming and supportive atmosphere in the school. Pupils are cared for well and they feel safe.
- Pupils' personal development and self-confidence improve over time.
- The teaching of mathematics has improved since the last inspection.
- Leaders have developed a curriculum that enables pupils to make good progress in their wider social and vocational skills.
- Most pupils leave school with worthwhile accreditation and go on to study at post-16 colleges.

### 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 leadership and management, by:
  - ensuring that those responsible for governance keep a close eye on trends over time of the progress, behaviour and attendance of pupils
  - ensuring that leaders monitor sharply the outcomes of their actions
  - implementing the performance management of teaching staff so that they receive precise feedback and have access to effective training
  - sharing good practice through links with other similar schools.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment, by:
  - making sure that leaders' checks on teaching are focused on the impact on pupils' learning
  - ensuring that teachers plan effectively to meet pupils' differing learning needs
  - ensuring that staff find out exactly what pupils know and can do through effective assessment procedures
  - strengthening the teaching of literacy so that pupils can practise their reading and writing skills across the curriculum for a variety of purposes
  - providing opportunities for practical investigation in science.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, there has been uncertainty about the future of the school. In September 2018, there was a change in proprietorship to Central Education Limited. The new proprietor, who originally set up the school in 1991, and the recently appointed principal, have provided much-needed stability. However, leaders' attention has been too focused on securing the future of the school rather than on making the rapid improvement necessary in the quality of teaching and learning.
- School improvement processes are not effective enough. While action plans do exist, leaders do not use these plans to drive up standards. Leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school and know broadly what they need to improve. However, they do not identify specifically enough the actions that they plan to take and the intended impact on pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders have not done enough to strengthen the quality of teaching across the curriculum. Leaders do not call staff to account for their work. The new principal does provide helpful feedback to staff about their teaching, but there is not a sufficient focus on the strengths and areas of teaching that require improvement. While staff report that they have received effective training since the last inspection, they do not yet have sufficient skills to understand how to meet effectively pupils' complex needs. Leaders have not yet implemented effective staff performance management processes.
- Nevertheless, leaders are successful in communicating their vision that pupils' welfare is at the heart of the school's work. Staff are united, loyal and work hard to understand how best to support pupils. Morale is high and staff say that they feel valued. Staff have a high regard for the new principal and report on recent improvements in the school. For example, they now meet regularly to share successful strategies in engaging pupils. As one member of staff said, 'We work well as a team.'
- Leaders have recently improved how staff collect and record pupils' progress, behavioural issues and other useful information. This new systematic approach provides clear information about a pupil and enables easy retrieval for future reference. Leaders have started to sharpen their use of this information so that they can support pupils effectively.
- The core curriculum of English, mathematics, science, art, and personal and social education is supplemented with a practical skills-based curriculum. The range of vocational courses includes cooking, handicrafts, motor vehicle maintenance and other courses related to construction. For some pupils, this curriculum offer is not wide enough to fulfill their interests and vocational aspirations. Leaders have identified that the curriculum requires development and have recently acquired an area of woodland to develop land-based courses.
- Pupils speak positively about the programme of regular extra-curricular activities. Among other trips, they visit local community leisure centres and shops and practise their improving social skills.
- Leaders ensure that there is provision to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Inspirational quotes adorn the walls and pupils are provided with a strong moral code of conduct. They are taught to understand other's points of view.

- Parents are highly complimentary about the school and what it does for their children. They particularly praise the leaders for frequent phone calls and visits from school staff to keep them informed about their children's progress. Parents say that their children enjoy coming to school. As one parent said, 'This school is just what my son needs.'
- Leaders recognise the importance of working with partners to improve their school. They have strengthened the mathematics curriculum through work with other schools in a local mathematics hub. They have also engaged well with the local authority. The local authority has provided expertise and checks to support the school to make improvements, especially in its safeguarding practices.

## **Governance**

- The proprietor, who was formerly the headteacher, has set up a governing body in order to strengthen governance arrangements. However, formal governing body meetings with the production of minutes have yet to be established. The two current governors are experienced and have undergone safeguarding training.
- Since the last inspection, the proprietor has ensured that the independent school standards are checked regularly. The standards have all been met.
- The proprietor checks the work of the new principal by visiting regularly and observing the day-to-day running of the school. Despite this, governance has not kept a close enough eye on pupils' progress and attendance over time. Governors do not receive enough information on all aspects of school performance to provide effective support and challenge.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The shortcomings in safeguarding during the last standard inspection have been rectified. There is now a well-considered safeguarding policy that takes account of the latest guidance of the Secretary of State. The school's new website is currently under construction. The draft design has a prominent safeguarding area that will include the safeguarding policy. The safeguarding policy is provided to parents on request.
- Staff are kept up to date with safeguarding matters and know what action to take should there be a concern about a pupil. Staff communicate well with parents, carers and other agencies should there be safeguarding issues about a pupil. The focus on keeping comprehensive records on the school's new management information system enables effective information sharing, should it be necessary.
- The management of health and safety has improved considerably. There are now comprehensive risk assessments regarding school activities and areas of the school building. Fire-safety risk assessments have been completed and fire-evacuation rehearsals take place.
- Appropriate checks are made when recruiting staff. These checks are recorded on a register and reviewed regularly, as is required.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement. Staff have not received sufficient training so that they can plan to meet pupils' needs fully. Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Leaders have not developed well enough teaching, learning and assessment, including how to plan schemes of work or lessons effectively to meet pupils' needs. Teachers' plans typically itemise tasks to be completed rather than what learning will take place. Consequently, sometimes pupils are not supported well enough or may be given work that is too easy for them.
- Pupils are not always fully interested in the topics covered. In science, pupils do not do enough practical activity. They do not have enough opportunity to investigate the world around them and the links to science. Their work shows an emphasis on learning scientific facts which do not inspire them sufficiently well.
- The teaching of literacy is not effective enough. There is not an agreed approach among staff to supporting pupils with literacy difficulties. Consequently, teachers' expectations about reading and writing vary and pupils do not have enough opportunity to practise their literacy skills. For some pupils, their inability to write well causes low self-esteem and adds to their negative behaviours.
- Pupils learn well in the vocational areas of cooking and technology. This is because pupils carry out practical activities and have to think for themselves. Pupils also learn different techniques in art to develop high-quality pieces of work. They plan their own projects in these practical subjects with the support of their teachers. They have opportunities to discuss their ideas and extend their understanding. They develop their social skills well in addition to gaining knowledge in their vocational area of study.
- Pupils' academic progress is not monitored by staff sufficiently well. Teachers' questioning does not develop and check pupils' understanding routinely.
- Teaching in mathematics has improved since the last inspection because teachers monitor pupils' progress well. Teachers check pupils' understanding regularly through tests and challenges. Subsequent teaching activity fills the gaps in pupils' knowledge and builds new mathematical skills. While much progress has been made in delivering the mathematics curriculum, pupils do not have enough opportunity to work on solving mathematical problems.
- Parents are provided with regular updates about their children's overall progress, especially regarding their attitudes and behaviour. Because pupils' individual education plans are not specific enough, these updates do not provide precise enough information about pupils' academic progress.
- There is a culture of mutual respect across the school. Staff build positive working relationships with pupils. Pupils feel secure in their learning environment and attempt work because they feel valued by their teaching staff. Pupils receive constant encouragement and positive feedback. This is a real strength of the school.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school. Staff make them feel welcome. For example, pupils have the opportunity to have a hot drink and breakfast on arrival at school while they discuss any concerns that they may have with staff. Pupils' physical and emotional needs are catered for well.
- Staff are positive role models. Pupils say that their mentor provides them with helpful support and guidance. Leaders ensure that mentors are readily available to guide pupils should they need additional support during the school day. Pupils know that their mentor will liaise with parents regularly. As a result, pupils feel cared for well. As one pupil said, 'Staff help us here because they understand us.'
- Pupils are polite and courteous most of the time. Pupils work well together and develop cooperative social interactions. Bullying and name-calling are rare. Pupils said that should they have a problem, then staff take effective action to resolve it.
- School leaders provide effective and impartial careers advice. Pupils have the opportunity to explore their possible next steps after leaving the school. Staff provide helpful support to pupils when applying to colleges for their post-16 placements.
- The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn about keeping themselves safe. Pupils learn well about the dangers when using the internet and the risks of extremism. They find out about healthy living and making appropriate lifestyle choices.
- Parents say that their children are safe in the school. They are appreciative of staff members' efforts to support their children.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' attendance is monitored on an individual basis. A number of pupils and their parents report on improved attendance once they join the school. However, attendance is below national averages.
- When pupils start at the school, many display negative behaviour. Staff help pupils to settle through developing positive and trusting relationships with them. Nevertheless, incidents of behavioural outbursts are not always managed well by all staff. This means that learning becomes disrupted for some pupils when they cannot concentrate well enough in lessons.

## Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Most pupils have experienced disjointed education in the past and have gaps in their learning. When pupils join the school, they are assessed so leaders can find out about pupils' starting points. However, this assessment information is not used sufficiently well to inform pupils' individual education plans. As teachers do not know exactly the needs of

pupils, expectations of pupils' academic progress are not high enough.

- Pupils' work in books and files is sometimes disorganised or missing. Pupils in key stages 3 and 4 do not make enough progress across the curriculum.
- Despite difficulties in measuring progress across year groups, pupils are entered for a range of courses at the end of Year 11. Most-able pupils have the opportunity to study for GCSE examinations in English, mathematics, statistics and biology. There were too few pupils to make a meaningful comparison with national averages.
- Pupils also achieve other appropriate vocational and pre-vocational certification. Leaders have made sure that pupils have the qualifications to prepare them for the next stage of education.
- Pupils' writing is not developed sufficiently well. There is not enough opportunity for them to write at length and for a variety of purposes. Consequently, pupils are not practising their writing skills frequently enough and they are not making sufficient progress.
- Pupils make strong progress in their speaking, listening and social skills. Pupils have ample opportunity to explain their feelings and opinions and most are very articulate.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to read, including worksheets, recipes, instructions and posters. However, there is not enough emphasis on helping pupils read books for pleasure. Consequently, pupils' reading skills are underdeveloped.
- Parents comment positively on the progress that their children make once they start at the school. There are a small number of parents who would like to see their child make more progress in literacy, or in areas of the curriculum that are currently not offered at the school.
- In 2018, the vast majority of pupils went on to study at a variety of post-16 colleges. They enrolled successfully in a range of vocational courses.

## School details

Unique reference number	126149
DfE registration number	938/6249
Inspection number	10056673

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	14
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Central Education Limited
Chair	Geoffrey Wyatt
Headteacher	Mark Gill
Annual fees (day pupils)	£36,000
Telephone number	01444 450111
Website	<a href="http://www.centraleducation.co.uk">www.centraleducation.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@education-centre.org.uk">info@education-centre.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	27–29 June 2017

## Information about this school

- The Education Centre provides for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health issues. Many pupils have additional needs associated with autism spectrum disorder or dyslexia. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Most pupils have been excluded from their previous schools.
- 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.
- The current proprietor, who established Central Education Limited in September 2018, set up the school in 1991. He resigned the proprietorship in 2008 and took over the headship



in 2015 after the resignation of the previous post holder. He then relinquished the headship in September 2018 and appointed a new principal.

- The school's last standard inspection was in June 2017, when its overall effectiveness was judged to be inadequate and a number of the independent school standards were found to be unmet. The school received further monitoring inspections in November 2017 and July 2018 when it was judged to not meet all of the independent school standards checked during those inspections.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector met with the proprietor and held a phone call with another governor.
- Meetings were held with the principal, the deputy principal and three further members of staff. There were five responses from staff to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- The inspector held telephone conversations with four parents. There were no responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire.
- Teaching and learning were observed across all age groups.
- The inspector carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work and viewed case studies. Meetings were held with three pupils.
- A telephone conversation was held with a representative from one of the local authorities that places pupils at the school.
- A number of documents were scrutinised, including improvement plans, safeguarding documents and policies.
- The school's new website was viewed in draft form.

## Inspection team

Sue Child, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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