

Inspection of The Anderson School

Enterprise Campus, Luxborough Lane, Chigwell, Essex IG7 5AB

Inspection dates: 10–12 March 2020

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils have mixed views of the school. Some enjoy school and point out how staff help them overcome their anxieties. Others say it is chaotic and feel events in school heighten their anxieties. The serious behavioural incidents they witness impact on their education and well-being. They say the school is dangerous. They do not feel safe.

Pupils are not helped to improve their behaviour well enough. Staff expect too little of them. Too many pupils dictate what they will or will not do. Some staff do not have the skills or confidence to support these pupils effectively.

Bullying remains a worry for a significant number of pupils. These pupils are not confident that staff can or will address their concerns.

Most pupils have a main diagnosis of autism, with other conditions. It takes time and effort for pupils to build relationships and trust staff. Pupils say how much some staff help them. However, the frequent staff changes leave many pupils feeling let down. Two thirds of the pupils who completed the survey would not recommend this school to a friend moving to the area.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Curriculum planning is weak. Staff lack the skills to tailor a curriculum to pupils' specific needs. Not enough thought has gone into what pupils will study and how best to teach it. Most curriculum plans only cover what pupils will study this year. The links to future pieces of work are cursory. The curriculum does not help pupils to make progress in their learning.

Frequent changes in staff mean that the curriculum is not taught well. The lack of continuity means pupils' learning and confidence suffer. Too many staff have low expectations of what pupils can do. Pupils have significant gaps in their learning. Pupils could do far more than some staff expect of them. Too many pupils are persistently absent. Those who are present often have their learning disrupted.

There are pockets of very effective teaching, where staff have considered pupils' interests and matched learning to individual needs. Here, the work that pupils study links to what they will cover in the future. Pupils learn more. Sadly, this is the exception rather than the rule.

The high number of significant behavioural incidents disrupts pupils' learning. Pupils we spoke with, and a significant proportion of pupils who completed the Ofsted questionnaire, told us that they did not feel safe in school. They do not like the homophobic language and feel particularly threatened by abusive language, which is common, and the violent behaviour of a minority of pupils. A substantial number of parents continue to raise concerns about the safety of pupils on the school site.

The effectiveness of learning mentors is too variable. Some play a crucial and valuable role in changing pupils' lives. Others have either not read or acted on the information on pupils that they receive from leaders. A core group of pupils refuse to complete any work in certain subjects. Staff supervising these pupils often lack the necessary skills to guide pupils back to work. Pupils are not learning how to better regulate their behaviour or to develop resilience.

Pupils told us that they do not feel free from bullying. Many are not confident that teachers would deal effectively with bullying. Conversely, teachers believe that they protect pupils effectively from bullying. This indicates that some pupils are still unable to make themselves heard or do not have the confidence to talk to staff about how they are feeling.

Risk assessments for individual pupils are comprehensive. Teachers are given detailed guidance on how to manage pupils' behaviours. However, we found that not all staff have the skills, experience or confidence to act on this information. Where incidents have required physical interventions, the records of staff supervision are sparse. They do not show how staff routinely learn from their own behaviours and actions following serious incidents. Leaders are not getting precise information that allows them to spot trends and patterns. They lack the necessary strategic overview to improve practice over time.

The school admitted too many pupils with high-level needs too quickly. Staff are not equipped to deal with the needs and complex behaviours that pupils present. The coordination of the work by the behaviour, attendance, alternative provision, safeguarding and multi-disciplinary teams is disjointed. The number of physical interventions is too high. Leaders have terminated the placements of some pupils in order to keep other pupils safe.

Leaders have received a significant number of complaints. Some parents do not feel that complaints have been resolved to their satisfaction. Some of their concerns are well founded.

The director and deputy director of education have played a crucial role in identifying the deep-rooted issues. Their analysis of the school's weaknesses has been incisive and accurate. The decision to halt any further admissions was well considered as an approach to addressing the many concerns they have highlighted. They realise the scale of the improvement work required. Together with the acting principal, they have put in place plans to drive improvements. However, there is a lack of clarity over other leaders' roles and responsibilities. Currently, much of the leadership is ineffective.

Gaps in leadership have been an issue. Leaders have had to prioritise dealing with the significant behavioural incidents, safeguarding issues and associated work. They have not given enough focus to the curriculum or their other strategic responsibilities. Eleven of the independent school standards have not been met.

The proprietorial body has failed to ensure that leadership and safeguarding arrangements are effective. The improvements required from the standard inspection in May 2018 have not been made. Monitoring has been ineffective. There has been a marked decline in standards. The improvements required following the emergency inspection in October 2019 have not been made quickly enough.

The recently formed local governing body is already providing a more rigorous approach to monitoring the school's effectiveness. However, it lacks the expertise on curriculum development needed to oversee the necessary improvements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Despite recent steps taken by leaders to secure the immediate safety of pupils in the school, the culture of safeguarding is still not effective. Too many pupils do not feel safe in school. Pupils say bullying is frequent. They are not confident that staff will deal with the concerns they raise.

Crucial information about managing pupils' behaviour is not known or understood by some staff. They fail to take the necessary actions to mitigate risks to pupils' safety. Basic safety checks for the recruitment of staff are undertaken, as are checks on pupils who are educated off-site.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- A culture of safeguarding is not embedded across the school. Too many pupils do not feel safe in school. Staff need to act on the information they receive about pupils and be more assiduous in their record-keeping. Staff need to take all of the necessary actions to mitigate risks to pupils' safety. Leaders need to ensure that all staff understand and act on information they receive.
- The curriculum is too disjointed, particularly around the work pupils complete from year-to-year. In some subjects, the planned curriculum is not delivered effectively. Some staff lack the essential skills and knowledge to convey key concepts in their subject areas. Pupils complete activities that are not well matched to their needs. Leaders need to develop curriculum plans that enable pupils to build on what they already know and can do. Staff need the skills and knowledge to teach the curriculum effectively so that pupils achieve as well as they should.
- The expectations of some staff are too low. A core group of pupils do not behave well enough or complete enough work. They disrupt the learning of others. This is limiting pupils' academic progress and personal development. Leaders need to ensure that all staff have the skills and confidence to support pupils back into learning when standards of behaviour dip.

- Leaders need to monitor effectively the impact of the training they provide and take effective action for improvements.
- Too many pupils are absent too frequently. This prevents them from gaining the skills and knowledge they need to prepare them well for life after school. Leaders need to provide effective strategies to increase pupils' attendance. In particular, they need to support parents so that their children attend well.
- Pupils are not benefiting sufficiently from the work of support staff and therapy teams. The provision is not coordinated well enough. Leaders' strategic view of the provision is hampered by the lack of precise information. Leaders need to provide a coherent approach so that staff work closely together.
- Governors have not monitored the school's effectiveness closely enough. Standards have declined. Many of the independent school standards are not met. The new local governing body is proving more successful, but there are gaps remaining in the group's expertise on the curriculum and the quality of education. The proprietor needs to ensure that those responsible for governance have the skills and knowledge needed to fulfil their roles and responsibilities well.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	144775
DfE registration number	881/6068
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10143450
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	48
Number of part-time pupils	1
Proprietor	National Autistic Society
Chair	Carol Homden
Headteacher	Matthew Sharpe
Annual fees (day pupils)	£39,596 to £71,998
Telephone number	020 3375 0100
Website	www.autism.org.uk/services/nas-schools/anderson
Email address	theandersonschool@nas.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	1–3 May 2018

Information about this school

- The Anderson School caters for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities related to autism spectrum disorder, including pathological demand avoidance. All pupils have education, health and care plans and are placed by local authorities.
- The school is based in new, purpose-built buildings in Chigwell, Essex.
- The numbers on the school roll have decreased since the inspection in October 2019, from 57 to 48 pupils.
- The school is registered for pupils between 11 and 19 years. Currently, there is no sixth-form provision.
- Since March 2019, the proprietorial body appointed a director and assistant director of education to make regular visits to monitor the school's work.
- There have been changes in senior leadership since the emergency inspection in October 2019. At the time of this inspection, there was an acting headteacher in place.
- A newly established governing body was set up in September 2019.
- The proprietor is the National Autistic Society (NAS). The NAS is the proprietor of six other independent schools and special free schools that are registered with the Department for Education (DfE), as well as a school in Scotland.
- The school has ceased taking admissions. Some local authorities have stopped referring pupils to the school.
- The school's inspection history:
 - in May 2017, the DfE commissioned Ofsted to conduct a pre-registration inspection. All of the independent school standards were deemed likely to be met
 - the school's first standard inspection was conducted in May 2018. The school's overall effectiveness was judged as requires improvement and two independent school standards were not met. The unmet standards related to teaching, and leadership and management
 - the school submitted an action plan to the DfE about how it was going to address the unmet standards. This plan was deemed not to be acceptable on 31 July 2018
 - the school resubmitted an action plan to Ofsted in December 2018. This plan was deemed acceptable
 - the school received an emergency inspection in October 2019, focusing on part 3 to part 8 of the independent school standards. The school did not meet all of the standards checked
 - following the emergency inspection, the school submitted an action plan to the DfE about how it was going to address the unmet standards. This plan was deemed not to be acceptable on 3 January 2020.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This inspection amalgamated the progress monitoring inspection and the standard inspection that was due before May 2020.
- We did deep dives in English, mathematics, history and personal, social and health education. We met with curriculum leaders, teachers and pupils, and looked at pupils' work in these subjects. We also spoke with pupils and staff about different aspects of the school.
- We had meetings with the acting headteacher, other senior leaders, the director and deputy director of education, two members of the local governing body (one of whom was the chair and also a trustee of the proprietorial body), and other staff in the school.
- We met with groups of pupils formally and also spoke to them informally throughout the inspection.
- We held telephone conversations with parents of pupils at the school. We also spoke with representatives from local authorities who place pupils at the school.
- We scrutinised a range of information from the school, including leaders' self-evaluation, the school's development plan, and their behaviour, attendance and safeguarding records. We spoke to pupils, staff and the designated safeguarding lead about procedures to keep pupils safe.
- We took account of the 70 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 39 responses to the free-text facility for parents. We also took note of the 36 responses to Ofsted's survey of staff's views, and the 29 responses to Ofsted's pupils' survey.
- We took account of the complaints received by the DfE from parents.
- We made no judgement on the quality of the sixth-form provision. Since opening, the school has had no students of sixth-form age.

Inspection team

John Randall, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Philippa Darley

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kim Pigram

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work–
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
 - 2(2)(d) personal, social, health and economic education which–
 - 2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act [9];
 - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that–
 - 2(2)(e)(i) is presented in an impartial manner;
 - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options;
 - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential; and
 - 2(2)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught; and

- 3(h) utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor–
 - 5(a) actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
 - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which–
 - 5(b)(i) enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence;
 - 5(b)(ii) enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England;
 - 5(b)(iii) encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality in which the school is situated and to society more widely;
 - 5(b)(iv) enable pupils to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England;
 - 5(b)(v) further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures; and
 - 5(b)(vi) encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that–
 - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively.
- 10 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that bullying at the school is prevented in so far as reasonably practicable, by the drawing up and implementation of an effective anti-bullying strategy.
- 14 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that pupils are properly supervised through the appropriate deployment of school staff.

- 15 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006[13].
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

- 33 The standard about the manner in which complaints are handled is met if the proprietor ensures that a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented which deals with the handling of complaints from parents of pupils.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

For the progress monitoring aspects of this inspection: The school's progress in meeting previously failed standards

At the emergency inspection, in October 2019, seven of the independent school standards were not met, including six that had been met at the standard inspection, in May 2018. Following the October 2019 inspection, the proprietor submitted an action plan. The action plan was evaluated in January 2020 and deemed not acceptable.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)

Paragraph 9, 9(a), 9(b), 9(c)

Paragraph 10

Paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- These independent school standards were not met at the emergency inspection, in October 2019, because concerns about pupils' safety and well-being were not dealt with effectively. There were too many gaps in records of safeguarding

concerns. Inappropriate behaviour was not recorded or used systematically. The number of behaviour incidents and parental complaints were high. Pupils had not been supported to modify their inappropriate behaviour. These independent school standards had been met at the standard inspection, in May 2018.

- In the action plan, the proprietor proposed a range of opportunities for reviewing policies and practice, including gaining the views of pupils and families.
- This inspection, as highlighted in the text above, found that pupils' behaviour and attitudes, including bullying, are of significant concern. Policies remain ineffective in helping pupils to improve their behaviour and maintain their safety and well-being.
- These independent school standards remain not met.

Paragraph 11

- This independent school standard was not met at the emergency inspection, in October 2019, because the health and safety policy did not relate to the school's context. This independent school standard had been met at the standard inspection, in May 2018.
- In the action plan, the proprietor proposed to review the health and safety policy.
- The health and safety policy is now fit for purpose.
- This independent school standard is now met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33

- This independent school standard was not met at the emergency inspection, in October 2019, because leaders were not responding well enough to concerns raised by parents. Some long-standing issues had not been fully resolved. This independent school standard had been met at the standard inspection, in May 2018.
- In the action plan, the proprietor proposed to implement a new policy and keep parents informed of the changes.
- This inspection, as highlighted in the text above, found that many parents have complained since the emergency inspection, in October 2019. It remains the case that parents' concerns about the provision are well founded.
- This independent school standard remains not met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

- This independent school standard was not met at the emergency inspection, in October 2019, because the proprietorial body had failed to hold leaders to account. Too much of leaders' work was poor.

- In the action plan, the proprietor proposed a range of development opportunities for staff, particularly for those with senior responsibilities.
- This inspection, as highlighted in the text above, found that the provision and outcomes have deteriorated since the emergency inspection, in October 2019, and the standard inspection, in May 2018. Many parents are dissatisfied with the provision for their children and their concerns are well founded. Six of the seven independent school standards not met at the emergency inspection, in October 2020, remain not met. Five additional independent school standards are not met.
- This independent school standard remains not met.

The school continues to not meet the following independent school standards

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that–
 - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively.
- 10 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that bullying at the school is prevented in so far as reasonably practicable, by the drawing up and implementation of an effective anti-bullying strategy.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

- 33 The standard about the manner in which complaints are handled is met if the proprietor ensures that a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented which deals with the handling of complaints from parents of pupils.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;

- 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
- 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

The school now meets the following independent school standard

- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.

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