

Inspection of Alternative Centre of Education

45/51 Market Square, Edmonton Green, London N9 0TZ

Inspection dates: 14–16 September 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Many pupils join the school with a poor history of school attendance. Staff nurture the pupils. They promote pupils' self-esteem and character as well as academic success. Pupils value the opportunities the school provides, such as amateur boxing lessons and one-to-one sessions with a personal development mentor. The provision creates a sense of belonging. This motivates pupils to try hard.

Staff understand pupils' learning, social and emotional needs well. Leaders are ambitious for what pupils can achieve. Planning takes careful account of pupils' needs and aspirations. In the majority of subjects, pupils develop detailed knowledge and skills. Achievement in a few subjects is not as strong. Leaders make good use of the school and local environment to stimulate pupils, for example through the range of sports provided in the local leisure centre. Pupils engage in their education and staff prepare them well for the future.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Staff are good role models. They are skilful in calming pupils down. Staff pick up on early signs of potential conflict. Pupils said that they feel safe in school and bullying is rare. They are confident that staff will deal with it effectively should it occur.

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

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Most are linked to a diagnosis of social, emotional and mental health. Leaders are clear that this should not prevent pupils from achieving highly. They have reviewed and developed the curriculum with this aim in mind. Pupils learn a broad range of subjects. The subject curriculum is typically carefully and skilfully sequenced. This enables pupils to achieve well by the time they leave at the end of Year 11.

Personal development is at the heart of the school's work. Teachers and personal development mentors work closely together. They incorporate personal development into pupils' taught curriculum and daily experiences in school. Pupils have a range of opportunities to contribute to the life of the school. The COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic impeded trips and visits, but these have now restarted. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is suitable. It meets statutory requirements. Pupils experience meaningful opportunities to learn about different cultures, faiths and relationships. Staff support pupils well in making decisions about their next steps in education. When they leave the school, pupils move on to appropriate courses, including apprenticeships.

Over time, and in an age-appropriate way, pupils learn about healthy friendships and relationships. They develop their understanding of different behaviours. This includes how the behaviour of others might affect them. Pupils learn about what is unacceptable behaviour, including harmful sexual behaviour.

The curriculum is well planned and delivered in the majority of subjects. This includes mathematics and English. Across different subjects, staff plan activities that build on pupils' previous learning. Teachers check that pupils have understood what they have learned before. They make sure that pupils revisit their learning to help them know more and remember more. For example, in mathematics, pupils have lots of practice to help them develop accuracy in their written calculations.

In some subjects, leaders have not broken down what they want pupils to know and learn in enough detail. This limits pupils' ability to get a deep understanding in these subjects. Teachers have regular professional development in a range of areas. However, they have limited opportunities to develop their subject-specific knowledge and understanding.

Leaders place suitable emphasis on developing pupils' reading and writing. Staff use phonics techniques well to help pupils who have large gaps in reading skills. Leaders have raised the profile of reading in the school. They encourage pupils to read for pleasure more than before. Pupils read with accuracy, but they sometimes lack fluency and understanding. Leaders have set this as a priority to improve.

Most pupils treat staff and each other with respect. They try hard to keep focused on their work. Deliberate disruption to learning is rare. Sometimes pupils forget themselves and use inappropriate language. However, when this occurs, staff give pupils a firm reminder and help them get back on track.

The proprietor is also the head of centre. The proprietor provides suitable support and challenge to the school's leaders. Leaders ensure that they meet all the independent school standards consistently. The school also complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders check the impact of their work carefully. They identify strengths and weaknesses through frequent reviews. Staff are positive about how leaders support and empower them. They said that leaders are mindful of staff well-being.

Leaders have applied to extend their provision to the primary phase, for up to 12 pupils in Years 3 to 6. They have refurbished the building next to the current school. Leaders have appointed staff. They have curriculum plans in place. Leaders have prioritised reading, writing and mathematics. Plans suggest that pupils will learn a broad range of subjects. Leaders have thought through what pupils will learn in different year groups. They have also included opportunities to promote pupils' wider development. The school is likely to meet all the relevant independent school standards, should the material change be implemented.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders promote safeguarding through all aspects of their work. They ensure that relevant policies are fit for purpose and that staff follow them, for example when following up cases where children are missing in education. The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website. Leaders pursue all concerns rigorously, involving experts from beyond the school where necessary. This includes social care, educational welfare and the police.

Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Their vigilant care of pupils is evident in their daily work. Staff take prompt action if they identify any potential concerns. This contributes to a strong safeguarding culture.

What does the school need to do to improve?

- Curriculum planning in some subjects is not as detailed as it is in mathematics and English. Pupils do not acquire a strong enough understanding in these subjects over the time they are in school. Leaders should ensure that the knowledge and skills taught in these subjects are specified in greater detail and placed in the right order, showing clear progression across different year groups. Leaders have already taken concrete action to bring this about by recruiting specialist teachers. Transitional arrangements are therefore applicable in this case with regards to curriculum intent.
- Teachers receive regular training to improve their practice that is generic rather than subject specific. This limits the opportunities for teachers to acquire a deeper understanding of how knowledge can be organised within subjects to bring about stronger impact on pupils' learning. Leaders should organise a systematic programme of subject-specific training for teachers that supports the existing arrangements for staff professional development.
- Leaders have adapted the curriculum to help further develop pupils' comprehension and love of reading. While most pupils can read accurately, they do not always do so fluently and with understanding. Leaders should ensure that pupils gain sufficient fluency and comprehension skills.

How can I feed back my views?

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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	143036
DfE registration number	308/6006
Local authority	Enfield
Inspection number	10204299
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	16
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Alternative Centre of Education Ltd
Chair	Glendene Griffith
Headteacher	Glendene Griffith
Annual fees (day pupils)	£14,625 to £24,375
Telephone number	020 3793 5302
Website	www.alternativecentreofeducation.org
Email address	office@alternativecentreofeducation.org
Date of previous inspection	31 October–2 November 2017

Information about this school

- This alternative provision is located in Edmonton, in the London Borough of Enfield, and is registered to educate up to 30 pupils.
- The school caters for young people with a history of disrupted schooling, mainly owing to behavioural and social difficulties. The pupils who attend the school have been referred, in the main, by Enfield local authority, and some directly by mainstream schools.
- Many pupils join at various points during the academic year. Most of these pupils remain on roll at their secondary school.
- All pupils have SEND, and most also have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not have a governing body. The head of centre is also the proprietor of the school.
- The school does not use any other alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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 meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors evaluated the whole curriculum, but carried out deep dives in English, mathematics and PSHE. This involved meeting with leaders of those subjects, visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work and talking to pupils and staff about learning in these subjects.
- Inspectors met with the proprietor, headteacher and other staff to discuss a range of relevant issues. They held discussions with two groups of pupils, teachers and personal development mentors.
- Inspectors reviewed recruitment and vetting checks on adults working in the school and looked at the single central record of these checks. They scrutinised safeguarding arrangements, including relevant policies and how these translate into practice.
- The lead inspector toured the site and considered other evidence of the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

- As part of this inspection, inspectors were asked by the Department for Education to assess the school's request for a material change. This was to extend the age range from age 11 to 16, to age seven to 16, and to increase the number on roll from 30 to 47. Inspectors' evaluation of this request appears in the main section of this report.

Inspection team

Nasim Butt, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kanwaljit Singh

Ofsted Inspector

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