

Inspection of The Michael Tippett School

Heron Road, Herne Hill, London SE24 0HZ

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 November 2021

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
The quality of education	Inadequate
Behaviour and attitudes	Inadequate
Personal development	Inadequate
Leadership and management	Inadequate
Sixth-form provision	Inadequate
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

The education pupils receive at this school is of a very poor standard. Staff do not have the necessary expertise to check if pupils, most of whom cannot communicate through speech, are feeling safe.

The curriculum has not been thought through properly. Pupils, who all have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), have little opportunity to learn the things they need to make a success of the next stage of their education. Teachers do not all follow the agreed curriculum plans. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are low. However, pupils do enjoy the extra activities on offer, such as horse riding and yoga. These are intended to enrich pupils' wider experiences.

Pupils lose interest in lessons because they often cannot understand what staff want them to do. Not enough is done to find out whether pupils feel protected from bullying. Similarly, records of actions taken to improve pupils' behaviour provide little information on how successful these actions have been.

Staff's morale is low. They are concerned and confused about the school's current situation. Those new to the school or new to teaching are particularly overwhelmed.

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

The interim executive headteacher and interim head of school have accurately identified why the curriculum is weak in the short time they have been at the school. However, they have not had time to do anything about this. Leadership of subjects is underdeveloped, which means there is insufficient capacity to make the necessary improvements.

Recently, there have been a number of changes to membership of the governing body. Governors are now finding out at first hand what the school is like. However, over time, they have not challenged and supported leaders from a well-informed position. The local authority is supporting interim leaders and governors to urgently improve the school.

All pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). These are reviewed each year, but this process has not been overseen properly by senior leaders. Reviews are managed remotely by a member of staff who is not on site. This means valuable opportunities for establishing coherence between the curriculum and objectives in EHC plans are being missed.

Pupils, including in the sixth form, do not learn or remember enough in subjects. For example, in mathematics, teachers do not use or choose resources well to support pupils to understand mathematical ideas. Teachers think up lessons in isolation, with little reference to curriculum plans. They do not direct other adults sufficiently. This means that pupils do not achieve well.

Staff do not offer effective help to pupils who need communication devices to learn in English and other subjects. Some teachers are attempting to teach phonics to pupils but with limited skills and no focus on specific content. The school offered some remote education to pupils during the COVID-19 pandemic, though there is little evidence of a coherent approach to this.

Teachers' explanation of lesson content can be confusing and inaccessible for pupils. When this happens, pupils' behaviour deteriorates. Pupils' EHC plans often refer to communication devices, but teachers do not consistently insist they are used or even taken to all lessons. Interim leaders are not content with the current arrangements to support pupils whose behaviour sometimes deteriorates rapidly. However, they have not had time to improve this or apply the revised behaviour policy they have drafted in response to their concerns.

In some other subjects, such as personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, leaders make sure teachers know what pupils should learn and remember. Pupils understand what they are expected to achieve. This is helping them, for example, to understand how to form and maintain relationships with others.

Pupils have regular opportunities to interact with the wider community. For example, they do work in the nearby public gardens. Pupils and students in the sixth form learn to consider others, for example by organising a cake sale to raise money for charity.

Interim leaders have discovered that staff are concerned about their workload and conditions of employment, particularly the management of their contracts and the structure of the school day. They have made it a priority to listen to concerns and begin to tackle them.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Staff are not trained well enough to identify concerns and help pupils who are not able to say what may be worrying them. Policies have been recently reviewed by interim leaders, but these have not yet been shared with staff and existing policies are ineffective.

Interim leaders do not know enough about the history and chronology of concerns related to pupils known to social care because they have not been able to gain access to all records.

Interim leaders have ensured that shortcomings recently identified in checks on the suitability of staff have been rectified. Where checks on staff have not yet been received, interim leaders have put measures in place to assess and manage potential risks.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not provided effective training to help staff pick up safeguarding concerns when pupils cannot speak about them. This means concerns may be getting missed. Leaders should urgently ensure that staff have the necessary guidance and training to identify safeguarding concerns and provide early help for pupils who find it hard to communicate verbally.
- Interim leaders have set about improving safeguarding policies and practice but still do not have access to all the information they need to evaluate safeguarding fully. Those responsible for safeguarding should obtain access to the full range of information and the steps that have been taken to reduce these risks.
- Leaders' capacity to improve the curriculum is weak because subject leadership is not strong. Leaders and governors should ensure there is capacity to improve the content, sequencing and implementation of the curriculum so that the quality of education becomes good.
- Many pupils need to use communication aids to help them learn and make their views or concerns known, but staff lack expertise in supporting them to use these. This means that pupils who need communication aids are disadvantaged compared to their classmates. Leaders should ensure staff have the skills and abilities to help pupils use the necessary equipment successfully.
- Leaders do not know enough about the outcomes of annual reviews of EHC plans. Teachers do not include enough opportunities for pupils to achieve objectives written into EHC plans in lessons. Leaders should obtain a secure oversight of the EHC annual review process and make sure teachers use objectives in plans to decide on the content and sequence of lessons.
- Leaders' records of instances of poor behaviour do not explain enough about what led up to the concern. They do not allow leaders to check how well staff have attempted to prevent these incidents becoming serious. Leaders should ensure that behaviour records are used well to improve both pupils' behaviour and staff's management of any incidents.
- Leaders and those responsible for governance may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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 school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	133442
Local authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	10212677
Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	79
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	12
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Ese Ihemadu
Headteacher	Marilyn Ross
Website	http://tmts.me.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- At the time of this inspection, the substantive executive headteacher, the head of school and the school business manager were not in school. An assistant headteacher was also away. An interim executive headteacher and interim head of school were leading the school in their absence.
- There has recently been a major staff restructure. In the summer term, two assistant headteachers left the school. In the current term, the previous chair of the governing body and some other governors resigned. A new chair and vice-chair have been appointed, along with four new governors.
- All pupils in this school have SEND. Most have profound and multiple learning difficulties or severe learning difficulties. Some have autism spectrum disorder.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures, because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

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

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and PSHE. During these, they sought pupils' views, looked at pupils' work, visited lessons, spoke with leaders about curriculum plans and held discussions with teachers. They also viewed curriculum plans in some other subjects.
- Meetings were held with the interim executive headteacher and interim head of school, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at records related to safeguarding and behaviour. They examined the records of checks leaders have made on the suitability of staff and sampled some staff's files.
- Inspectors took into account responses to the online Ofsted Parent View questionnaire.

Inspection team

Andrew Wright, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Karen Matthews

Ofsted Inspector

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