

Inspection of The Copper Academy

Holsworthy Business and Training Centre, Western Road, Rose Cottage, Holsworthy,
Devon EX22 6DH

Inspection dates: 28 to 30 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous
inspection

Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent
school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

The proprietor has not ensured that the school meets all of the independent school standards (the standards), particularly in relation to safeguarding procedures. This means pupils are at risk of harm in certain circumstances.

Pupils make variable progress in the different aspects of their learning. For example, pupils learn well through the specialist curriculum for hair and beauty. However, they are less successful in gaining the necessary knowledge and skills needed in other curriculum areas, including reading and mathematics.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and attend well. There are positive relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils like spending time together, both in lessons and during breaktimes. There is a calm and purposeful feel to the day. Pupils particularly enjoy learning about hair and beauty. They are keen and highly motivated to learn.

Pupils say that bullying is unlikely to occur due to the strong relationships and positive atmosphere in the school. Pupils learn about anti-bullying. Bullying is not tolerated. Pupils feel very happy and relaxed. Pupils say, 'This is a friendly environment. You don't have to worry about being judged here.'

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

Since the pre-registration inspection last year, the proprietor and other leaders have not taken the right steps to ensure that the standards are fully understood or implemented. Senior leaders do not have sufficiently robust systems or activities to check how well the school is doing, or for holding themselves and others to account. As a result, they have been too slow to identify some key weaknesses, particularly in ensuring effective safeguarding arrangements are in place. For example, the proprietor has failed to implement an acceptable admissions register or appropriate training for staff in physical restraint. Consequently, there are gaps in being able to guarantee pupils' welfare and well-being at school.

The proprietor has not ensured that there is an appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE) programme in place. Leaders have not understood pupils' entitlement to compulsory sex education, albeit with the right for parental withdrawal in agreed circumstances. As a result, pupils are not provided with all the necessary information or guidance for their own personal development. However, in all other ways, leaders ensure that there is a full and beneficial personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme. This helps pupils to learn right from wrong and to make healthy decisions. Pupils are supported well to learn about the world around them and for acceptance. For example, pupils learn about the rights of others, including the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus community and prejudice. The school teaches an understanding of the protected characteristics well.

The curriculum is not consistently ambitious or well sequenced and coherent in some areas. In reading and mathematics, for example, there is a lack of expertise and subject knowledge so the curriculum is not developed as well as it could be. There are plans and activities in place. Pupils engage in these subjects, and they like to read. However, learning is not consistently well matched to pupils' needs. As a result, some pupils do not make sufficient progress. Conversely, the hair and beauty (specialist) curriculum is high quality. Teachers have expert subject knowledge and use exemplary resources and amenities to great effect. Practical sessions with clients help to recreate professional salon standards in the school. Teachers use assessment well to provide timely and helpful support for pupils.

Leaders are dedicated to improving pupils' reading. They want pupils to learn to read and experience the joys of reading. There have been successes in getting some pupils to read who have never read previously. The proprietor has ensured that the school has a systematic synthetic phonics programme in place. However, parts of this are 'cherry-picked' and the implementation of the programme lacks fidelity to the scheme. More widely, teachers do not share a common knowledge of how to teach phonics well enough. Consequently, the quality of early reading is left to chance and not consistently of a high enough quality.

The proprietor ensures pupils receive beneficial experiences to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils enjoy learning how to care for the environment. They study aspects of other countries, religions and cultures. The PSHE curriculum promotes fundamental British values. Pupils enjoyed learning about the monarchy as a British institution through the recent Platinum Jubilee celebrations. The school makes sure that independent, high-quality careers advice and useful work experience help pupils to gain valuable experiences and insight for further education, training or employment. As a result, these pupils with complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are often well supported and prepared for the next stage in their life. Pupils recover their self-esteem and regain much confidence through the school's approach to PSHE.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders have not ensured that all necessary safeguarding checks or requirements are in place. There is also some confusion about the purpose of different checks, such as the prohibition from teaching and enhanced criminal record checks. As a result, some checks are not in place or have not been recorded appropriately on the single central record (SCR). This means the processes for vetting adults who work with pupils are incomplete and place pupils at risk of harm. However, in other ways, staff know what they must do to safeguard pupils and work well with other agencies to ensure pupils' safety. Pupils learn about safeguarding, including online safety and emergency evacuations on site.

The website contains a copy of the school's safeguarding policy. This meets requirements.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- The proprietor does not ensure that all necessary safeguarding checks and requirements are in place. Therefore, pupils are placed at risk of harm and safeguarding arrangements are not effective. The proprietor must ensure that all relevant safeguarding requirements are fully in place, including the completion of all pre-employment checks for the SCR and maintaining a thorough admissions register.
- The proprietor has not ensured that an acceptable RSE programme is in place for pupils. This means pupils are not receiving or benefiting from their full curriculum entitlement and hinders their understanding of healthy relationships. The proprietor must ensure that the RSE programme fully meets all requirements to positively promote pupils' welfare and further their personal development.
- The proprietor, governors and senior leaders do not have strong systems for checking the quality of their work. This means they remain unaware of weaknesses and cannot respond quickly enough to issues or failings. Leaders must ensure that there are rigorous checks and balances in place to assure themselves of the quality and effectiveness of their work in all parts of the ISS.
- The proprietor has not ensured that the curriculum is consistently ambitious and coherent in all subjects. As a result, pupils do not make strong enough progress in all areas of the curriculum. The proprietor must implement a high-quality curriculum so that pupils can make equally strong progress in all areas, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- The school has a programme for teaching early reading and systematic synthetic phonics for pupils who need this. However, there are too many inconsistencies in how this is understood or implemented. Consequently, pupils' experiences of early reading are not good enough. Leaders must implement a high-quality early reading and phonics programme with full understanding so that pupils who may still need this can catch up.

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	148630
DfE registration number	878/6087
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10230034
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	14 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	7
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Emma Hosie
Headteacher	Emma Hosie
Annual fees (day pupils)	£9,750
Telephone number	07779768661
Website	www.thecopperacademy.co.uk
Email address	emma@thecopperacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Copper Academy is a small independent special school in Holsworthy, Devon.
- The school operates for pupils with SEND. Currently, all pupils on the register have an education, health and care plan. Pupils have a range of medical needs and diagnoses, including those with autism spectrum disorder, social, emotional and mental health needs and other disabled learners.
- The proprietor is also the headteacher of the school.
- The school has a small governing body.
- The school does not use any alternative provision for pupils.

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

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

- Inspectors met with the headteacher/special educational needs coordinator and members of the senior leadership team. The lead inspector met with a group of leaders, including the head governor.
- Inspectors considered how well the school protects pupils and keeps them safe, including scrutiny of key documentation, such as the SCR, safeguarding policy and pupils' records/files.
- Inspectors considered pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. The inspection gathered pupils' views of the school through discussion. One inspector met with parents to gather their views. The lead inspector took account of the five responses to Ofsted's free-text survey.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English (reading), mathematics, PSHE and the specialist curriculum (beauty, hair and nails). In most deep dives, inspectors discussed the curriculum with the proprietor, visited an example lesson, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work and assessment information. PSHE was observed during other lessons and wider activities.

Inspection team

Stewart Gale, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mark Burgess

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor-
 - 2A(1)(a) ensures that every registered pupil who is provided with primary education at the school is provided with relationships education,
 - 2A(1)(b) ensures that every registered pupil who is provided with secondary education at the school is provided with relationships and sex education, except in so far as the pupil is excused as mentioned in sub-paragraph (2),
 - 2A(1)(d) in making arrangements for the purposes of paragraphs (a), (b) or (c), has regard to any guidance under section 80A of the Education Act 2002 that applies in relation to the provision of education by maintained schools.
- 2A(2) Arrangements made by the proprietor for the purposes of sub-paragraph (1)(b) must ensure that where a pupil's parent requests that the pupil is wholly or partly excused from sex education provided as part of relationships and sex education, the pupil is so excused until the request is withdrawn, unless or to the extent that the head teacher considers that the pupil should not be so excused.

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.
- 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].

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 18(2)(b) no such person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction;
 - 18(2)(c) the proprietor carries out appropriate checks to confirm in respect of each such person-

- 18(2)(c)(ii) the person’s medical fitness;
- 18(2)(c)(iv) where appropriate, the person’s qualifications.
- 20(6) The standard in this paragraph is met in relation to an individual ("MB"), not being the Chair of the school, who is a member of a body of persons corporate or unincorporate named as the proprietor of the school in the register or in an application to enter the school in the register, if-
 - 20(6)(a) MB-
 - 20(6)(a)(ii) does not carry out work, or intend to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction.
- 21(3) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is-
 - 21(3)(a) in relation to each member of staff ("S") appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether-
 - 21(3)(a)(ii) a check was made to establish whether S is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act;
 - 21(3)(a)(iii) a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction;
 - 21(3)(a)(iv) checks were made to ensure, where appropriate, that S had the relevant qualifications.

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.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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