

Inspection of Active Support Education Centre

Unit 1 Britannia Estates, Leagrave Road, Luton, Bedfordshire LU3 1RJ

Inspection dates: 13 to 15 September 2022

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| 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?

Pupils value the second chance and the safe, nurturing environment that Active Support offers. Over time, they build their confidence, begin to manage their own behaviour and re-engage in learning, often after long periods away from formal education. Pupils trust staff because they know they want the best for them. For many pupils, this is their first successful school experience in a long time. Positive relationships are promoted well in an atmosphere of mutual respect. New pupils are supported to settle in quickly.

Pupils say they feel safe in school and learn how to keep safe in different situations. Bullying is rare. If it happens, pupils are confident that staff will manage it well. Pupils appreciate their school's inclusive culture and know that derogatory language and discrimination are not tolerated. While most pupils improve their attendance and arrive on time, some do not attend as regularly as they should or are late to lessons at the start of the day.

Pupils are prepared well to take the next steps in education. As a result, after a period of short-term support, some are ready to go back into their mainstream school. By the end of Year 11, almost all pupils move on to college courses, employment and/or training.

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

The proprietor, leaders and governors are committed to ensuring that all pupils are supported to regain their self-esteem and achieve well. Working together, leaders have established a flexible and inclusive curriculum that captures pupils' interests and gets them back on track in learning. Pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) is at the heart of the school's offer.

Programmes are tailored to meet individual needs, with a strong focus on English, reading and mathematics. The range of awards and qualification routes offered include GCSEs. Vocational programmes in subjects such as hospitality and catering, construction and sports coaching are popular options supporting progression to higher-level college courses.

Expectations are high. Learning is planned to build on what pupils already know. Regular opportunities to revisit important knowledge and skills enable pupils to remember more of the things that they have been taught previously. Checks when pupils join the school help teachers identify any gaps, including in English and mathematics. Effective strategies are planned to address these. The special educational needs coordinator makes sure that essential information about pupils' learning needs is shared and updated routinely. Pupils typically achieve well from their different starting points.

Ensuring that pupils read regularly and with confidence is a high priority. Leaders have recently introduced a whole school reading strategy in all subjects. They are

reviewing how pupils who struggle with their reading and writing are supported to catch up. However, these changes are at an early stage. Planned training is yet to be implemented. Inconsistencies, for example, in the teaching of phonics mean that a few pupils do not improve their reading and writing fluency as quickly as they could.

Pupils learn to build positive relationships. Staff manage any potentially challenging situations effectively. Most pupils respond quickly to teachers' instructions, so lessons are purposeful. Lunchtime in the school's café is a sociable event as staff and pupils eat together. Although most pupils make significant strides in improving their behaviour, attendance and punctuality, some do not attend as regularly as they should. A few struggle to arrive at lessons on time at the start of the day. This is an ongoing improvement priority for school leaders.

The PSHE curriculum takes account of pupils' starting points and individual needs. They are taught, for example, how to keep safe, to form healthy relationships and the importance of positive physical and mental well-being. The principles of tolerance and respect for individual differences and diverse cultures are promoted well. Relevant careers guidance helps pupils to prepare for their next steps in education, employment and/or training.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the strength and weaknesses of the school. They know what they need to do to continue to improve. Ensuring that staff have a manageable workload and that their well-being is protected are high priorities. The proprietor and governors are a skilled and experienced team. Working closely with the joint headteachers, they have made sure that all the independent school standards are met.

Premises are bright and suitably maintained. All the necessary health and safety checks are completed. Risk assessments are detailed and regularly reviewed. Effective arrangements are in place for the supervision of pupils. Admissions and attendance registers meet requirements. Information for parents and commissioning agencies is available through the school's website, including procedures for handling complaints.

Governors demonstrate an effective balance of challenge and support in overseeing the provision.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are well aware of the challenges that the school's vulnerable pupils face. Consequently, they make sure that staff are well trained, including in understanding the local safeguarding context, drugs, gang and knife crime. Securing pupils' mental health and well-being is a high priority. The school team know what to look out for when a pupil is at risk of harm. They are quick to report any concerns. Links with

external agencies providing support are strong and effective. The safeguarding policy reflects the most recent guidance. Safeguarding records are well maintained, including the required pre-employment checks on new staff.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders have raised expectations of reading and how pupils who have fallen behind are supported to catch up. However, inconsistencies, for example in the teaching of phonics, mean that a few pupils do not improve their reading and writing fluency as much as they could. Leaders should ensure that the planned training is implemented quickly and that staff have the knowledge and skills they need so that all pupils achieve consistently well.
- Although most pupils make significant improvements in their attendance over their time in the school, some do not attend as regularly as they should or are late to lessons at the start of the day. This means that they do not achieve as well as they could when they are not in school. Leaders should continue to work closely with pupils and families to minimise the time spent away from lessons so that all pupils are supported to achieve their very best by the time they leave at the end of Year 11.

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.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 142672 |
| DfE registration number | 821/6013 |
| Local authority | Luton |
| Inspection number | 10230304 |
| Type of school | Other independent special school |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 9 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 54 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 33 |
| Proprietor | Sujel Miah |
| Headteacher | Matthew Ford and Shahed Koyes (Joint Headteachers) |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £23,040 to £48,000 |
| Telephone number | 01582 256040 |
| Website | www.activesupportededucation.co.uk |
| Email address | matt@activesupportededucation.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 23 to 25 January 2018 |

Information about this school

- This independent special school is registered to provide education for up to 100 pupils aged between nine and 16 years. Almost all pupils on roll are of secondary education age.
- A high proportion of pupils are dual registered with both the school and the commissioning provider.
- The school provides full-time and part-time programmes, working with the local authority and local schools.
- Pupils have either been excluded from school or are at risk of exclusion. All have social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Placements are accepted at different points during the year and at various stages of pupils' education. Many pupils have experienced significant disruption to their prior learning experiences.
- The school's therapeutic inclusion unit supports pupils with education, health and care plans who have not settled previously in a mainstream setting.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision or supply staff.
- This is the second full standard inspection since the school opened in September 2017.
- The school was judged good in all aspects at the first full standard inspection in January 2018. All the independent school standards were met.

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

- Inspectors met with senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, curriculum leaders and a wider group of staff, including two early career teachers.
- The lead inspector spoke with the proprietor, who is also the chair of governors, and the safeguarding governor. She also spoke on the telephone with representatives of the local authority and commissioning schools.

- Inspectors spoke informally with pupils around the school and during lunch in the school's café. Pupils also joined meetings with inspectors to speak about their school experiences and learning over time.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in the following subjects: English, including reading, vocational subjects, mathematics and sports studies. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils and looked at pupils' work.
- The documentation checked included school improvement plans, the single central record of pre-employment checks on new staff, a range of school policies, health and safety, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors checked compliance with all the independent school standards, including against the standards relating to school premises.
- Inspectors considered one response to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and one free-text comment. Inspectors also took into account 23 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Christine Dick, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Nathan Lowe

His Majesty's Inspector

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