

Inspection of a good school: Camden Centre for Learning (CCfL) Special School

Harmood Street, Camden, London NW1 8DP

Inspection dates:

28 to 29 September 2022

Outcome

Camden Centre for Learning (CCfL) Special School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy here. Staff take time to understand pupils' complex social, emotional and mental health needs. They use this knowledge effectively to build strong relationships with pupils.

Leaders have introduced a new curriculum and have high expectations of pupils. For some pupils, this is the first time that they have enjoyed learning and made progress.

Bullying does happen sometimes, but pupils say they know who to talk with to help them sort things out. When behaviour incidents happen, they are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils feel safe and are kept safe.

Parents and carers are happy with their child's progress and like the way the curriculum is adapted to suit pupils' needs. Many parents used words such as 'fabulous' and 'amazing' to describe the support their child receives. They value the commitment of leaders and staff in helping their child to succeed.

Staff enjoy working at the school and appreciate the support they receive from leaders. Staff work well together. There is a strong sense of community, centred on the learning and well-being of pupils.

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

Recently, the cohort of pupils attending the school has changed. Now, many more pupils come to the school because of severe emotional, mental health or behavioural issues. In response, leaders have adapted the approach of the school. The focus is now on nurturing pupils and understanding the complexity of their needs. This has been successful in increasing the engagement of pupils and reducing the frequency of serious incidents. However, expectations of behaviour are not always clear or high enough. Disruptive behaviour and lack of engagement are still evident in some lessons. This means that the curriculum is not always taught effectively.

With this changing cohort, leaders realised that they needed to redesign the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils with very complex needs. The resulting curriculum is carefully thought out so that learning builds over time, and pupils are helped to know and remember more as they move through the school. However, this is not yet consistently implemented. Senior leaders know this, and plans are well underway to make sure pupils in all lessons have the best opportunities to learn.

Leaders use initial assessments effectively to find out what pupils need help with. Pupils often arrive at the school needing to develop their reading skills. Leaders have rightly identified improving the teaching of reading as their highest priority. Pupils are taught to read, and many become proficient readers. However, some staff lack sufficient expertise in teaching pupils how to read. For example, the teaching of phonics sometimes lacks precision. Consequently, some pupils do not learn to read as effectively or as quickly as they could.

Staff provide pupils with a comprehensive and very well-considered range of enrichment activities. These contribute to the excellent provision for pupils' personal development. Pupils also take part in workshops led by external organisations. These include the local theatre and equine centre.

Leaders have implemented a well-planned and well-delivered careers programme, and invite all the local post-16 providers to speak to pupils. This ensures that pupils are well informed about their options. Leaders promote vocational and technical education through work experience and careers fairs. Pupils have opportunities to study a wide range of vocational qualifications.

Leadership and governance are strong. Governors understand their role to support leaders to improve the school. Governors know how to hold leaders to account, and routinely test out what leaders tell them.

Staff feel well supported. They feel that senior leaders look after them well. Some staff commented during the inspection that the recent changes had led to an increase in their workload. However, most staff spoke positively about how senior leaders take steps to make sure workloads are reasonable, realistic and manageable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have embedded a strong culture of keeping pupils safe. Pre-employment checks on staff are carried out thoroughly. All staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Because they have been trained well, they know the signs that pupils might need extra help. Staff pass on concerns to leaders, who deal with these appropriately.

Members of staff understand the risks that pupils face in the community. All staff have received training on preventing radicalisation and child criminal exploitation. Pupils who may be at risk of harm are closely monitored. Pupils feel safe and are well supported by staff.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Work to deliver a well-sequenced curriculum is not embedded. Consequently, pupils do not consistently build on what they know from one lesson to the next in all subjects. Leaders need to continue to embed the new curriculum so that pupils know more and remember more in these subjects.
- Some staff are not sufficiently well trained in teaching pupils to read, including in the teaching of phonics. This means that pupils are not able to access all areas of the curriculum fully. Leaders need to ensure that staff are well trained and confident in the teaching of reading so that pupils catch up quickly.
- In some lessons, pupils struggle to be calm and listen to staff's instructions. As a result, learning can be disrupted for some pupils by the behaviour of others. Leaders need to ensure that the management of pupils' behaviour consistently meets leaders' expectations.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2013.

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.

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	100092
Local authority	Camden
Inspection number	10240368
Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	37
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Janet Grauberg
Headteacher	Gabriella Thomas
Website	http://ccfl.camden.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 May 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Camden Centre for Learning Special School is a special school that caters for pupils between the ages of 11 and 19 years.
- Since the last inspection, the type of pupils attending the school has changed and now the school specialises in meeting the needs of pupils who have complex social, emotional and mental health needs.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- During the inspection, inspectors held discussions with the headteacher and other leaders, including curriculum and pastoral leaders.
- Inspectors held discussions with teachers, teaching assistants and governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics and personal, social and health education. For each of these subjects, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with members of staff individually and in groups and spoke to pupils at various points during the inspection. Inspectors took account of responses to pupil and staff surveys, as well as Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors looked at records relating to behaviour, bullying, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding arrangements by checking the school's approach to staff recruitment, scrutinising policy documents and meeting with the designated safeguarding lead.

Inspection team

Francis Gonzalez, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Angela Corbett

Ofsted Inspector

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