

Inspection of Central Education Ltd

1–3 Barclay Court, Market Place, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 1DB

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

The pupils who attend the school regularly feel safe and know they have adults around that will look out for them. Over time they build trust and learn to respect those that teach and support them. Each day starts with tea and toast, the opportunity to share news and take a breather from life's challenges before learning begins.

Most pupils attend this school because they find it difficult to behave well. The respect that pupils learn to give trusted adults is not replicated between pupils. Although targeted bullying is rare, pupils are sometimes rude to each other. They try to goad each other and can use foul and homophobic language towards each other. Adults give pupils constant reminders about their behaviour and poor language, but it does not always result in improvements.

In addition to their studies on site, pupils benefit from developing other skills and interests, for example fishing, which is very popular. They also take part in other recreational activities such as mountain biking and lawn bowls.

Leaders have tried to raise expectations about the quality of education and have begun to prioritise reading. However, expectations about the behaviour of pupils towards each other are not high enough and are not being consistently met.

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

Most pupils who join this school have been excluded from other schools or have been out of education for a prolonged period of time. For the majority of pupils, rates of attendance improve rapidly when they join the school, but this is not the case for all. Where pupils do not attend regularly, staff take sufficient steps to check on their safety and well-being including carrying out home visits. However, this does not on its own improve their attendance.

During their time at the school pupils build a bond of trust with the adults that support them. This helps them to engage in the learning and social opportunities afforded to them by the school. Pupils feel able to speak freely to adults about anything that worries or concerns them. Parents and carers are positive about the care provided by the school.

The curriculum in English, mathematics and science is well planned and helps most pupils work towards GCSE examinations in English language and mathematics. Pupils are also given the opportunity to gain entry level qualifications in these core subjects and BTEC National Diploma qualifications in more practical and vocational subjects. Everyone who leaves Central Education at the end of Year 11 has a college place to go to. This gives pupils a sense of achievement. However, not all pupils are able to sustain these placements and complete the college courses, showing they have not been as well prepared as they could be. Nonetheless, the headteacher is

able to talk confidently about a number of pupils who have gone on to be successful in the world of work or study.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge and are making increasingly helpful use of assessment information to help plan what pupils should learn next. Leaders are also encouraging teachers and other staff to take greater account of the targets in pupils' education, health and care plans. In some subjects, the curriculum is not as well planned, and activities are chosen to interest pupils rather than build important knowledge on what pupils know already.

Recently there has been an increased focus on professional development for teachers that is starting to focus on learning and the curriculum. However, this is at an early stage. Staff work together well to problem solve around the needs of individual pupils.

Pupils are most engaged when activities are practical, such as in design technology where they were engrossed building bird boxes or in science where they were testing reaction times using a computer game. Reading is being promoted more around the school and pupils are becoming more fluent and confident. Pupils are also learning and remembering some of the vocabulary they are being taught across the curriculum. However, leaders have not yet enthused pupils enough to develop a love of reading.

Sometimes the behaviour of pupils can disrupt learning. Pupils remove themselves from lessons or verbally taunt their peers, so they are unable to concentrate. Although suspension is used appropriately for more serious behaviour incidents, this sporadic goading is not always addressed adequately.

Pupils are equipped with the skills to try and survive and thrive outside of school. Many pupils enjoy learning to cook and happily help to make the school lunches. Pupils learn about diversity and discrimination and use their personal experiences to fuel meaningful discussions. Appropriate relationships and sex education is provided for pupils.

The proprietor is in regular contact with the school leaders and is kept up to date with any issues or successes. His attention recently has been on securing potential new premises for the school and plans for a move in the future are progressing. This is likely to be a timely intervention. Although all the independent school standards relating to the current premises are met, the building is starting to get tatty in places and in need of redecoration.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The designated safeguarding lead knows each and every pupil well. He and his team work tirelessly with families and other professionals to keep pupils safe from harm. This includes the few pupils who are not attending school regularly. Staff have been

trained to recognise and respond to the specific risks that affect the pupils that attend this school.

Some aspects of safeguarding record-keeping could be improved to ensure that anyone deputising for the designated safeguarding leader could access all of the necessary information with ease. Some minor corrections were made to the record of recruitment checks during the inspection.

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

- The curriculum in some subjects is not well planned or sequenced. Teachers choose content to interest pupils or respond to issues rather than to build the essential learning that pupils need. This means that pupils could miss some key knowledge. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is as well planned in all subjects as it is in English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils do not show each other the respect they normally demonstrate towards adults. Pupils are often verbally abused or goaded by their peers, which distracts them from their learning. Leaders should reinforce and uphold their expectations about behaviour so that pupils are more respectful towards each other and can learn without disruption.
- A few pupils have very poor attendance. Although leaders have ensured they are safe, they are missing a substantial part of their education. Leaders should redouble their efforts to work with families and other professionals to help find solutions to help these pupils to attend school regularly.

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

Unique reference number	126149
DfE registration number	938/6249
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10232299
Type of school	Other independent special 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	Geoffrey Wyatt
Headteacher	Mark Gill
Annual fees (day pupils)	£36,000
Telephone number	01444 450111
Website	www.centraleducation.org.uk
Email address	info@centraleducation.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 to 21 March 2019

Information about this school

- The Education Centre provides for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health issues. Many pupils have additional needs associated with autism spectrum disorder or dyslexia. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Most pupils have been excluded from their previous schools.
- The Education Centre caters for secondary-aged boys and girls. A number of local authorities place pupils in the school. However, at the time of the inspection, all current pupils have been placed by West Sussex.
- The current proprietor, who established Central Education Limited in September 2018, set up the school in 1991. He resigned the proprietorship in 2008 and took over the headship in 2015 after the resignation of the previous post holder. He then relinquished the headship in September 2018 and appointed a new principal.
- The school does not use 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 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.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher throughout the inspection. Inspectors held meetings with staff and pupils and talked to pupils informally around the school.
- The lead inspector met with the proprietor.
- Inspectors explored the quality of education with a focus on reading, mathematics, science and art. Inspectors met with teachers, visited lessons, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at examples of their work.
- Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements in the school by speaking to members of staff and pupils. They also met with the headteacher (who is the designated safeguarding lead) to examine his knowledge, records and actions. Inspectors scrutinised records, including those relating to the safer recruitment of staff, health and safety, fire safety and risk assessment.

- Inspectors looked at the school’s website, had a tour of the school premises, examined policies and associated documentation and spoke to staff to consider if the school meets the independent schools standards.
- Inspectors spoke to a number of parents by telephone to gain their views of the school.
- The views of staff were captured through conversations throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Lee Selby, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Louise Walker

His Majesty’s Inspector

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