

Inspection of Centre Academy London

92 St John's Hill, Battersea, London SW11 1SH

Inspection dates: 22 to 24 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

The quality of education at this special school is poor. The curriculum lacks ambition. Leaders do not ensure that pupils build up knowledge and skills. Some pupils are taught a curriculum that does not include all the required areas of learning. Leaders' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. There is no planned curriculum for primary-aged pupils.

Leaders do not ensure that pupils have a wide range of opportunities that aim to develop their interests and talents. They have not organised adequate extra-curricular experiences or enough therapy provision. Arrangements to provide pupils with impartial careers education, advice and guidance are weak. Pupils, including those in the sixth form, are poorly prepared for their next steps.

Pupils are happy at this small school. They like its warm, friendly atmosphere. Pupils behave sensibly and respectfully. Incidents of bullying are dealt with appropriately. Most pupils work hard and have positive attitudes to learning. Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough because of their mental health needs. Leaders are supportive, but their expectations of pupils' attendance are not high enough. Too many pupils are routinely absent from school.

Some parents and carers, responding to the Ofsted Parent View survey, expressed dissatisfaction with the school. Their concerns related mostly to the quality of education that their children were receiving, as well as leaders' poor communication and administration.

Leaders' arrangements for safeguarding are not suitable or effective.

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

The school's curriculum is weak. Choices available to pupils lack ambition and breadth. Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not experience all the required areas of learning, including human and social, creative and technological education. Leaders also insist that some pupils must do film studies and then elect to study art or computing, which are the only other creative and technological options available to them. Pupils who wish to continue studying human and social education in Years 10 and 11 are unable to do so as this is not offered. Students in the sixth form work towards an internally awarded qualification that leaders do not think highly of. Leaders are replacing it next year with A-level and BTEC National Diploma qualifications. Leaders have not put in place any specific curriculum planning or provision for pupils of primary age.

In the subjects taught, some teachers have strong subject-specialist knowledge. Pupils are attentive in lessons because they want to learn. However, leaders and staff lack ambition for what pupils can achieve. The curriculum is not designed or tailored with the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in mind. Curriculum thinking does not ensure that subject content is taught

in a well-thought-through sequence. Leaders and staff have not identified what pupils need to learn and when. Leaders have not focused on training staff to plan and deliver an effective curriculum. Some teachers do not have the training they need to become subject specialists. Assessment is weak. Pupils' starting points are unclear or unknown. Teachers rely too heavily on functional skills and GCSE examination specifications for teaching and assessment, including for the youngest pupils. They do not check precisely what pupils know, understand and can do. As a result, pupils do not achieve well, including in the sixth form.

Leaders provide specialist teaching to some pupils with dyslexia. Leaders encourage pupils to read a range of texts. However, leaders have not put a phonics programme in place to help pupils learn to read. Staff are therefore not ready to provide consistent and effective support to pupils who may join the school needing further support to develop their reading accuracy and fluency.

Pupils said how much they enjoy outings, including to the theatre, museums and a recent residential stay in Devon. They were also pleased about the recent introduction of a school council. However, leaders organise no other extra-curricular activities to support pupils to explore their interests and talents.

Pupils are assigned to small mentoring groups. They also receive support from occupational and speech and language therapists but no longer have access to a school counsellor, which pupils said that they missed.

The programme of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education helps to teach pupils about British values, the range of differences people have, and how to stay safe. Leaders ensure that pupils are taught about healthy relationships, consent and online safety. The statutory requirements for relationships and sex education are followed.

Leaders have not organised for pupils or sixth-form students to receive impartial, personalised careers support. Careers education is weak, and pupils do not have access to any work experience. Pupils' current studies do not prepare them well for their next stage of education, employment or training.

Leaders' work is not checked because the proprietor has not established a process to set strategy, hold leaders to account and ensure that statutory obligations are met. The proprietor is failing to fulfil their statutory duties. Many independent school standards are not met. The most widespread failings relate to the quality of education.

Leaders and the proprietor have not ensured that policies and information are up to date, including those on the school's website. Some information is missing, including how to contact the proprietor and details about the number of formal complaints received. Attendance information is unreliably recorded and inaccurate. Leaders' expectations of pupils' attendance are too low.

Documentation, including records of fire safety checks, is disorganised. Some fire-safety checks have not been completed. The external fire risk assessment, undertaken in 2020, has not been updated. Leaders did not know about the actions identified in the assessment. The risk assessment written for the shared use of a leisure centre for physical education is weak.

There are no medical room or changing and shower facilities. Hot water supplies present a scalding risk. Drinking water supplies are not labelled. Leaders have not thought carefully about the possible risks presented when staff work alone with pupils, for example in the occupational therapy room.

Leaders do not send annual statements of income and expenditure to placing authorities for pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans.

The new sole proprietor and the headteacher have already led some work to begin to improve the school. Leaders and staff spoke repeatedly about being on the 'start of a journey'. However, leaders demonstrate a lack of capacity. Work to improve provision and overhaul the curriculum are at extremely early stages. Generally, staff were supportive of the changes that leaders have introduced and had no concerns about their workload.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders responsible for safeguarding have not provided new staff with timely induction training. Records of important safeguarding information, including concerns and actions taken, lack rigour. Vetting checks on adults have not been dated on the record of pre-employment checks since 2018. Some checks have not been completed, and the nature of some checks was not understood by leaders. The safer recruitment process does not reflect statutory guidance. For example, new staff have started work without completing application forms, and leaders do not check applicants' medical fitness.

There is no consistent, agreed approach to de-escalation and safe physical intervention for staff working with vulnerable pupils. Staff have not completed suitable de-escalation and physical intervention training.

Despite the shortcomings, staff know pupils well. They follow the school's safeguarding policy, which reflects the latest guidance. The policy is published on the school's website.

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

- Safeguarding is not effective because leaders and the proprietor have not ensured that the safer recruitment process reflects current government guidance. Induction training is not provided in a timely way. Record-keeping lacks rigour. The single central record of pre-employment checks on staff suitability is not compliant. Leaders and the proprietor should rapidly improve safeguarding arrangements and ensure that they take full account of the latest statutory guidance.
- The educational offer that leaders and the proprietor have put in place lacks ambition and breadth. Curriculum thinking is not well sequenced because leaders and staff have not carefully thought through what pupils need to learn and when. There is no planned curriculum for pupils of primary age. Some pupils of compulsory school age do not receive education in all the required areas of learning. Assessment is weak. Leaders have not focused on training staff to plan and deliver an effective curriculum. Leaders and the proprietor should thoroughly review the curriculum, assessment and professional training arrangements. They should ensure that a well-sequenced curriculum enables pupils of all ages to learn well in all subjects. They should ensure that all pupils of compulsory school age receive education that covers all the required areas of learning.
- The provision for personal development, including careers guidance, is poor. Pupils are not prepared enough for their next steps and have too few experiences which aim to help them to explore and broaden their interests. Leaders need to review and improve their work to support pupils' personal development. This includes making sure that pupils receive suitable therapy provision as well as impartial and timely guidance to support them to make well-informed decisions about their future education and careers.
- Leaders' recording of attendance information is disorganised. There are gaps in registers, incorrect codes are used, and inaccurate codes entered. This means that attendance information is unreliable. Leaders' expectations of pupils' attendance are too low, and many pupils are not attending regularly. Leaders and the proprietor should take steps to rapidly remedy the arrangements for recording attendance information accurately, in line with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. They should make sure that they use attendance information purposefully to follow up and provide appropriate support and challenge to pupils and their families with attendance.
- Leaders and the proprietor have not ensured that the fire safety standard is met. Leaders and the proprietor should ensure that all the required fire safety checks are completed on time, in line with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. They should ensure that any actions from external fire risk assessments are taken seriously and remedied. They should also ensure that information, such as certificates and logs, are organised and readily available.
- Leaders and the proprietor have not fully considered the risks presented on the premises or when using the local leisure centre facilities. Leaders and the proprietor should ensure that a suitable risk assessment policy is implemented effectively. They should ensure that use of therapy rooms and public spaces are thoroughly assessed to identify and mitigate against any risks that they present.

Risk assessments and supervision levels should be thoroughly thought through to ensure that risks to pupils are mitigated.

- Leaders and the proprietor have not ensured that the premises are compliant with the independent school standards. Hot water supplies are not regulated. Drinking water supplies are not labelled. There are no medical room, changing room or shower facilities. Leaders and the proprietor should take action to ensure that the premises meet all the requirements in Part 5 of the independent school standards.
- Leaders and the proprietor have not ensured that the school's website includes all the required information. Leaders do not send annual statements of income and expenditure to placing authorities for pupils with EHC plans. Leaders and the proprietor should ensure that all the required information outlined in Part 6 of the independent school standards is made available. This includes up-to-date policies, contact information for the sole proprietor, and formal complaints information. Leaders and the proprietor should produce and provide the required statements of income and expenditure to placing authorities.
- Leaders have not put a systematic, synthetic phonics programme in place. This means that leaders do not have a suitable programme available to help any pupils who may join the school at the early stages of learning to read. Leaders and the proprietor should ensure that arrangements are made to implement a phonics programme.
- Leaders and the proprietor have not ensured that there is a consistent approach to de-escalation and physical intervention. Staff are either untrained or received their training in schools where they were previously employed. Leaders and the proprietor should organise suitable training for staff so that there is a consistent, whole-school approach to de-escalation and physical intervention.
- Leaders and the proprietor have not put systems in place to check the effectiveness of leaders' work. Leaders and the proprietor should realise their plans to introduce governance and ensure that rigorous procedures are put in place to check the quality of their work.
- Many independent school standards are not met. These are listed in the annex to this report. Leaders and the proprietor should ensure that they know the independent school standards and take action to ensure that these are all met consistently.

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 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	101175
DfE registration number	212/6408
Local authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	10242731
Type of school	Day special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	9 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	10
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Rohan Murphy
Headteacher	Karen Lee-Douglas
Annual fees (day pupils)	£41,800
Telephone number	020 7738 2344
Website	www.centreacademy.net
Email address	londonschool@centreacademy.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	5 to 7 June 2018

Information about this school

- Centre Academy London is an independent special day school. It caters for pupils with a variety of SEND needs. These include specific learning difficulties, including autism spectrum disorder, and social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Pupils are placed at the school by a range of local authorities. Almost all pupils have EHC plans.
- The school has no separate sixth-form provision, although students continue to attend up until age 19.
- The proprietor information on 'Getting Information About Schools' (GIAS) is incorrect. The school now has a sole proprietor.
- The school's most recent inspection was its last standard inspection in June 2018.
- Following the previous principal's retirement and subsequent changes to the school's leadership structure in August 2022, the current headteacher became responsible for leading the school from September 2022.
- The school makes no use of alternative provision.
- The proprietor also owns Centre Academy East Anglia.

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 standard inspection was conducted with one day's notice.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in these areas: English and reading, science, physical education and PSHE education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the subject with the curriculum leader, visited available lessons, looked at samples of work, spoke to staff, and spoke to pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors considered a range of evidence to consider pupils' safety, personal development and behaviour. They spoke with three groups of pupils.
- Inspectors met with the school's senior leaders, including the headteacher and sole proprietor.
- Inspectors met with the school's leaders with responsibility for safeguarding and reviewed a range of safeguarding information, including pre-appointment checks on staff.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, and responses to online surveys for staff and pupils.

- Inspectors reviewed a range of evidence to check compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

James Waite, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Lisa Strong

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work–
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
 - 2(2)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education;
 - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that–
 - 2(2)(e)(i) is presented in an impartial manner;
 - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
 - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential;
 - 2(2)(g) where the school has pupils above compulsory school age, a programme of activities which is appropriate to their needs;
 - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress;
 - 2(2)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons; and

- 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.
- 4 The standard in this paragraph is met where the proprietor ensures that a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both, is in place.

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; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- 14 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that pupils are properly supervised through the appropriate deployment of school staff.
- 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.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

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(3) The checks referred to in sub-paragraphs (2)(c) and (except where sub-paragraph (4) applies) (2)(e) must be completed before a person's appointment.

- 21(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor keeps a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question.
- 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)(i) S's identity was checked;
 - 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;
 - 21(3)(a)(v) an enhanced criminal record certificate was obtained in respect of S;
 - 21(3)(a)(vi) checks were made pursuant to paragraph 18(2)(d);
 - 21(3)(a)(vii) a check of S's right to work in the United Kingdom was made; and
 - 21(3)(a)(viii) checks were made pursuant to paragraph 18(2)(e)
 - 21(3)(b) in relation to each member of staff ("S"), whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 23(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2), the standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 23(1)(c) suitable changing accommodation and showers are provided for pupils aged 11 years or over at the start of the school year who receive physical education.
- 24(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including–
 - 24(1)(a) accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils; and
 - 24(1)(b) accommodation for the short term care of sick and injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility.
- 24(2) The accommodation provided under sub-paragraphs (1)(a) and (b) may be used for other purposes (apart from teaching) provided it is always readily available to be used for the purposes set out in sub-paragraphs (1)(a) and (b).

- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.
- 28(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 28(1)(b) toilets and urinals have an adequate supply of cold water and washing facilities have an adequate supply of hot and cold water;
 - 28(1)(c) cold water supplies that are suitable for drinking are clearly marked as such; and
 - 28(1)(d) the temperature of hot water at the point of use does not pose a scalding risk to users.

Part 6. Provision of information

- 32(1) The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 32(1)(b) the information specified in sub-paragraph (3) is made available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate; and
 - 32(1)(h) where a pupil wholly or partly funded by a local authority (except where funding is solely for free of charge early years provision in accordance with the duty contained in section 7 of the Childcare Act 2006[16]) is registered at the school, an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil is provided to the local authority and, on request, to the Secretary of State.
- 32(2) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is–
 - 32(2)(b) either–
 - 32(2)(b)(i) where the proprietor is an individual, the proprietor’s full name, address for correspondence during both term-time and holidays and a telephone number or numbers on which the proprietor may be contacted.
- 32(3) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is–
 - 32(3)(f) details of the complaints procedure referred to in paragraph 33, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022