

Inspection of Assess Education

260 Picton Road, Wavertree, Liverpool L15 4LP

Inspection dates: 28 to 30 March 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils feel happy in school. Pupils often come to the school having missed significant periods of their education and with previously poor attendance. Many pupils appreciate the support that they receive. Pupils reported that there is an adult in school that they can talk to if they have any concerns.

Pupils reported that they feel safe in school. However, leaders' lack of oversight means that the systems to keep pupils safe are not effective. Leaders do not gather enough information about poor behaviour, including bullying, to deal with such incidents effectively.

Leaders' expectations for pupils' behaviour are low. Some pupils misbehave during lessons, and this is not challenged by teachers. That said, pupils are generally polite to adults. Too many pupils are regularly absent from school.

The curriculum is narrow and lacks ambition. Pupils are only able to study English, mathematics and science. This puts them at a considerable disadvantage when considering their next steps in education, employment or training. The proprietor and leaders do not have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), underachieve considerably.

Pupils do not benefit from an effective programme of personal development. Pupils do not study relationships and sex education (RSE), nor do they learn about fundamental British values or different religions. Pupils do not receive an appropriate programme of impartial careers education, advice and guidance. This prevents them from being fully prepared for life in modern Britain.

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

While leaders have a genuine desire to nurture pupils, they lack ambition for what these pupils might achieve. Pupils do not experience a broad curriculum. Pupils do not study the full curriculum as required by the independent school standards ('the standards'). The only subjects on offer are English, mathematics and science. Pupils typically follow an entry level or functional skills level qualification in these subjects. Very few pupils follow a GCSE route. The only GCSE science course offered is iGCSE human biology. Consequently, pupils are ill-prepared for the next stage of their lives.

Leaders have not designed suitable curriculums for the subjects that are taught. Too little thought has been given to the different needs of pupils, including those with SEND. For example, all pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 are taught the same content while they work together in one class.

Pupils do not receive the support that they need to achieve well. Most teachers are inexperienced and are not subject specialists. They do not devise appropriate activities to help pupils make sense of new learning. Teachers do not routinely check

whether pupils have made any errors or have misconceptions. Pupils do not achieve well.

Reading is not prioritised. Leaders do not identify pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read when they join the school. Pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge are not supported to catch up with their peers. This hinders how well these pupils learn across the curriculum. Across the school, pupils do not have opportunities to read widely and often.

There is no oversight of SEND provision. It is left to inexperienced teachers. In practice, this means that no one has identified and assessed the needs of pupils with SEND. Moreover, the quality of the information that teachers have for pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans is poor. This means that teachers do not receive the guidance that they need to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. These pupils underachieve significantly.

Leaders' behaviour policy does not set out clear expectations for pupils' conduct and the consequences for any unacceptable behaviour. Teachers do not use effective strategies to manage pupils' behaviour. Low-level behaviours which are not dealt with effectively by staff can escalate into serious incidents. Teachers told inspectors that some pupils' behaviour has, sometimes, become violent. Pupils' poor behaviour frequently disrupts lessons. Leaders do not keep records of behaviour or bullying incidents. It is not clear how consequences, such as 'time out', are monitored by leaders to check for any patterns and trends in behaviour, including bullying. As a result, pupils' learning, welfare and safety suffer.

Leaders' systems and processes for monitoring attendance are poor. Many pupils, including those with SEND, are routinely absent from school. Leaders do not take effective action to improve pupils' attendance. Pupils who do attend are frequently late. This is not challenged by leaders.

Leaders, including the proprietor, have not ensured that pupils' personal development is promoted effectively. Pupils are not taught RSE. Personal, social, health and economic (PHSE) education was not taught between October 2022 and early March 2023. Leaders have recently introduced a new programme to deliver PHSE education. Pupils have only just started to learn about online safety in the last few weeks. This means that pupils have missed important learning to support their knowledge of the world and their safety.

Pupils were not taught about the fundamental British values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance until very recently. Pupils are not taught about different cultures and faiths. They do not have opportunities to participate in physical education (PE) or extra-curricular activities. The school's outdoor space is unsuitable for any organised physical activity or for pupils to play. Pupils do not access a range of experiences and activities that prepare them well for life in modern Britain.

Careers provision is weak. An independent careers adviser provides one-to-one support for some pupils. However, this support is not well constructed. Year 11 pupils only receive information about careers options a few weeks prior to leaving school. This is too late. Pupils have no opportunities to visit local colleges or employers. Leaders do not organise work experience for pupils. Pupils lack the information that they need to make the important decisions about their next steps in education, employment or training.

The proprietor and leaders have not demonstrated that they have the knowledge and skills to improve the school. There is a lack of capacity for improvement in the school's leadership team. It is unclear how the school can improve without significant external support. The proprietor of the school does not ensure that the standards are met securely and consistently.

The premises that the school has moved to are entirely unsuitable and, even if improved, would certainly not accommodate the 60 pupils that the school is registered for. The building is unfinished, cold and recent water damage has made parts of it unusable. The outdoor space is in a poor state of repair. The surface of the playground is uneven, and the area is unkempt. There is no evidence that leaders have carried out robust risk assessments for these new premises. For example, leaders have completed no risk assessments for the area to the front of the school. This area is shared with a used-car sales garage and provides access for vehicles to an adjacent premises belonging to a scaffolding company. Leaders' fire risk assessment is cursory. There is no designated assembly point. Pupils reported that there have been no fire evacuation drills since moving to the new site. All of these failings pose a significant risk to pupils' welfare, health and safety.

The school's admissions and attendance registers do not meet statutory requirements. The admissions register does not contain details of two emergency contacts for each pupil. Attendance registers are completed in pencil and some pupils' attendance records for the whole of this academic year have been erased. The requirement to report the details of any pupil who has not attended school for 10 days to the local authority has not been adhered to. This is because leaders do not understand their statutory responsibilities for children missing education. The proprietor has not developed a RSE policy. The proprietor has not consulted with parents and carers as required.

Many policies do not reflect what is happening in this school. For example, there is a health and safety policy dated September 2022. However, this policy has not been updated since the school moved premises. Consequently, the policy is not relevant to this school. Moreover, it includes reference to staff wearing appropriate clothing in art and design lessons and design technology lessons, even though these lessons are not part of the school's curriculum. It also references the role of a school council, which the school does not have, and gardening activities, which do not take place.

The proprietor has not ensured that leaders have adequate plans in place so that pupils with SEND can fully access the school's premises and curriculum. Therefore, the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 are not met.

Staff feel well supported by leaders in the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The safeguarding policy is not up to date. There is a lack of safeguarding oversight by leaders. Moreover, despite receiving training, leaders and staff do not understand and carry out their statutory responsibilities.

Staff are unclear about their roles and responsibilities to report and record any concerns that a pupil may be at risk of harm. There were no safeguarding records that inspectors could check. There have been no referrals made to safeguarding leaders for any concern about a pupil since September 2022. This is despite pupils' multiple vulnerabilities.

Leaders have not referred concerns about any pupils to local agencies, despite school safeguarding leaders agreeing with inspectors that some pupils present a significant cause for concern. For example, some pupils have been absent from school for weeks on end without checks on these pupils' safety and well-being and any notifications to the local authority.

Pupils have only very recently started to learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The proprietor and leaders do not fulfil their roles effectively. Many standards are unmet. This has impacted negatively on all aspects of leaders' provision for pupils, including their education, welfare, and health and safety. The proprietor and leaders must ensure that they demonstrate the knowledge and skills required to ensure that all of the standards are met consistently well.
- There is a weak safeguarding culture in the school. Leaders' oversight of safeguarding is poor. Record-keeping is weak. This puts pupils at risk of harm. Leaders must ensure that there are adequate safeguarding policies, systems and processes in place to protect pupils at all times. This includes up-to-date, accurate risk assessments.
- Many pupils are routinely absent from school. The proprietor and leaders' systems to check, record and monitor attendance are inadequate. Pupils' attendance is low and shows little sign of improvement. This, in turn, poses a safeguarding risk and means that pupils miss out on learning. Leaders must take swift action to put in

place effective systems for monitoring, recording and addressing pupils' absence, so that pupils attend school regularly.

- The proprietor and leaders have not designed a curriculum that is sufficiently ambitious for pupils. The range of subjects offered is too narrow and leaders have not identified the essential knowledge that pupils must learn. This places a limit on what pupils can achieve. Leaders must ensure that all pupils study a suitably broad and ambitious curriculum that is well designed.
- Some teachers do not have strong subject knowledge. This prevents pupils from learning well. Leaders should ensure that all teachers are supported and trained to acquire the subject-specific knowledge that they need to deliver the curriculum well.
- Leaders have not prioritised the teaching of reading. Pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge are not supported to catch up. This affects how well these pupils can access the wider curriculum. Leaders must ensure that sufficient priority is given to identifying and supporting pupils who struggle to read. This is so that these pupils can catch up in reading quickly and access the full curriculum.
- The proprietor and leaders do not work effectively to identify and meet the needs of pupils with SEND. This prevents these pupils from accessing the curriculum and achieving well. Leaders must ensure that pupils with SEND are identified accurately. In addition, leaders should ensure that they clearly identify the strategies that teachers need to put in place to support these pupils. This will help to ensure that these pupils receive the timely and appropriate support that they need to achieve well.
- The behaviour policy is not fit for purpose. In addition, staff's expectations of pupils' behaviour are too low. This leads to some pupils misbehaving in lessons. Leaders must develop a suitable behaviour policy. In addition, leaders should ensure that staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and apply the school's behaviour policy consistently well.
- Pupils do not learn about RSE or about fundamental British values. In addition, pupils do not have the opportunity to build their PE knowledge and skills. This means that pupils are not fully prepared for their future lives. Leaders should ensure that they comply with their statutory duty to provide PE lessons and ensure that pupils study RSE, so that they are fully prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders do not provide pupils with a clear programme of impartial careers guidance and support. This limits pupils' understanding of the career choices that are available to them. Leaders should ensure that pupils receive a well-designed programme of careers advice, guidance and support to equip them to make informed decisions about their future lives.
- Leaders do not have an appropriate accessibility plan in place. This is in breach of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders must take action to ensure that the school has a suitable accessibility plan.
- The school premises and accommodation are not fit for purpose. They are not well maintained. There are no suitable spaces for pupils to study inside or to play

and participate in PE outside. Leaders must ensure that the condition of the building is improved, so that it is a safe and pleasant environment for both pupils and staff. Leaders must ensure that pupils can participate in PE outside safely.

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	138878
DfE registration number	341/6003
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10267662
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	14 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	37
Proprietor	Dena Robinson
Headteacher	Dena Robinson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£10,000
Telephone number	0151 7350036
Website	www.assessededucation.co.uk
Email address	denarobinson1327@hotmail.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 to 29 November 2018

Information about this school

- Assess Education is a mixed, independent day school offering alternative provision.
- The school's registered premises is at 260 Picton Road, Wavertree, Liverpool L15 4LP. However, the proprietor has moved premises to 189-193 Picton Road, Wavertree, Liverpool L15 4LP. The proprietor has not notified the Department for Education of this material change.
- The school is located on the same site as the proprietor's other registered school, Assess North West. Assess Education occupies the ground floor of the building.
- There are currently no students in the sixth form.
- Most pupils are placed at the school by the local authority. The local authority commissions places at the school to provide for pupils whose previous school placements have broken down or because they are new arrivals to the country and in Year 11.
- The school sometimes accepts pupils from different local authorities when they are being placed out of their area.
- Some pupils have an EHC plan. Most pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs. Some pupils have autism spectrum disorder. Some pupils are currently looked after.
- School leaders do not make use of alternative provision.
- At the time of inspection, some aspects of the school website were not functional. The school does provide the safeguarding policy to parents and carers on request.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, who is also the proprietor, other senior leaders, subject leaders and staff.

- Inspectors spoke to many pupils about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors checked the school's compliance with the standards. As part of this, an inspector made a tour of the school's premises accompanied by the headteacher.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation documents, risk assessments and behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures and the single central record. Inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils to check how effective safeguarding is in the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, PHSE education and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- No responses were received to Ofsted Parent View.
- No responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and pupils were received.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Philippa Darley

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; and
- 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)(d) personal, social, health and economic education which-
 - 2(2)(d)(i) reflects the school's aim and ethos; and
 - 2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act[9];
 - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that-
 - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
 - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress; and
 - 2(2)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
- 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor-
 - 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(1)(e) makes and keeps up to date a separate written statement of its policy with regard to the provision of education as required by each of paragraphs (a) and (b),
 - 2A(1)(f) consults parents of registered pupils at the school before making or revising a statement under sub-paragraph (e), and
 - 2A(1)(g) publishes a copy of the statement on a website and provides a copy of the statement free of charge to anyone who asks for one.
- 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.

- 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(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
 - 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;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
 - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;
 - 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;
 - 3(h) utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly;

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 5 The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 5(a) actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
 - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which-
 - 5(b)(ii) enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England;
 - 5(b)(iii) encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality in which the school is situated and to society more widely;
 - 5(b)(iv) enable pupils to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England;
 - 5(b)(v) further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures;
 - 5(b)(vi) encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act; and
 - 5(b)(vii) encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic process, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England;
 - 5(d) takes such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that where political issues are brought to the attention of pupils-
 - 5(d)(i) while they are in attendance at the school,

- 5(d)(ii) while they are taking part in extra-curricular activities which are provided or organised by or on behalf of the school, or
- 5(d)(iii) in the promotion at the school, including through the distribution of promotional material, of extra-curricular activities taking place at the school or elsewhere,

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.
- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that-
 - 9(a) a written behaviour policy is drawn up that, amongst other matters, sets out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupil misbehaviour;
 - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively; and
 - 9(c) a record is kept of the sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious misbehaviour.
- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005[12].
- 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].
- 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 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)(a) suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided for the sole use of pupils;
 - 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;
 - 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; and

- 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.
- 29(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable outdoor space is provided in order to enable-
 - 29(1)(a) physical education to be provided to pupils in accordance with the school curriculum; and
 - 29(1)(b) pupils to play outside.

Part 6. Provision of information

- 32(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 32(1)(g) any information reasonably requested in connection with an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act which is required for the purposes of the inspection is provided to the body conducting the inspection and that body is given access to the school's admission and attendance registers;
 - 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(1)(i) where a pupil with an EHC plan wholly or partly funded by a local authority or other body through public funds is registered at the school, such information as may reasonably be required for the purpose of the annual review of the EHC plan is provided to the responsible local authority; and
- 32(3) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is-
 - 32(3)(a) particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for admissions, misbehaviour and exclusions;
 - 32(3)(b) particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with EHC plans and pupils for whom English is an additional language;

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

- 33 The standard about the manner in which complaints are handled is met if the proprietor ensures that a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented which deals with the handling of complaints from parents of pupils and which-

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.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- Not met

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