

Inspection of The Copper Academy

The Holsworthy Business and Training Centre, Western Road, Holsworthy, Devon
EX22 6DH

Inspection dates: 20 to 22 June 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils have a strong sense of belonging at The Copper Academy. They develop positive attitudes to learning over time. Staff know pupils well. They support the well-being of pupils and their families. Strong relationships exist between staff and pupils. This helps pupils to feel safe and secure. Pupils try hard to meet the high expectations of behaviour set by leaders. They enjoy coming to school and attend regularly.

Pupils do not learn as well as they could. Some parts of the curriculum are not ambitious enough. Leaders want pupils to do well. However, the design of the curriculum, apart from the specialist hair, beauty and nails curriculum, does not support pupils to learn new knowledge well enough.

Parents and carers praise leaders for the nurture and support they give to pupils. Pupils typically join the school following a period of disrupted education. Leaders help pupils to settle quickly into the school routines. Pupils cooperate well with each other. They learn to communicate with others and talk about their feelings. A parent commented, 'The Copper Academy has had a big impact on my child's behaviour and helped them to access education for the first time.'

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

Leaders have made improvements to the curriculum. However, apart from the specific aspects of hair, beauty and nails, the curriculum lacks ambition. Pupils do not progress as they could through the curriculum. Leaders do not check gaps in pupils' learning with enough precision. Learning is not always based on what pupils already know. Leaders provide some opportunities for pupils to revisit prior learning. When this happens, pupils learn with more success.

The specialist curriculum is a strength of the school. Pupils engage well because they find learning interesting. Staff skilfully model techniques and check pupils' understanding. They know when pupils need support and when pupils can work independently. This helps to build pupils' resilience and confidence. Staff help pupils to reach 'industry standard' within their hair, beauty and nails practical work. This gives pupils a realistic understanding of what to expect in their work experience placements.

Leaders provide phonics training for all staff. There is a well-resourced library, including books that reflect different cultures and backgrounds. Most pupils read books that match their reading ability. They enjoy reading and often read for pleasure.

Pupils learn how to understand their thoughts and feelings. Staff quickly develop trusting relationships with pupils, based on mutual respect. Pupils talk about school being their 'safe space'. They feel able to share any worries with staff. Pupils feel

strongly that staff would not tolerate bullying. They say that staff would take any reported incidents seriously.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils' learning targets lack precision. Some pupils have targets that are unrealistic and hard to monitor. This makes it difficult for leaders to check the progress that pupils make over time and how the support they receive helps them to learn. Consequently, some pupils do not learn as well as they could.

Pupils have a developing understanding of world religions. They know it is important to treat everyone the same. There are some opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests, for example equine studies. However, the offer is narrow.

Governors have a weak oversight of the school. They are unsure what progress leaders have made within their priority areas for improvement. They do not check with enough rigour that leaders' actions have enough impact on the quality of education that pupils receive. Governors do not have the depth of knowledge that they need of the independent school standards (the standards). This means they do not support and challenge leaders to ensure all of the standards are met consistently over time.

Leaders have suitable plans in place to ensure pupils with disabilities can access the school offer. This complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have made significant improvements to safeguarding procedures. They ensure that all adults receive suitable training. Leaders provide additional training that helps staff to understand the vulnerabilities of pupils at the school. This enables staff to remain vigilant and record and report concerns with accuracy. Leaders take prompt action in response to concerns, including working with external agencies.

Pupils learn about important aspects of staying safe, such as online safety, through the curriculum. Leaders make the correct safeguarding checks during recruitment on staff who join the school. The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website.

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

- Apart from the specific aspects of hair, beauty and nails, the curriculum lacks ambition. Pupils do not progress as well as they could through the curriculum. The proprietor must continue to develop the curriculum design, including assessment. This will ensure that pupils learn as well in all subjects as they do in the specialist curriculum.

- Pupils' learning targets lack precision. This makes it difficult for leaders to check the progress pupils make over time and how effective the support is that they receive. Some pupils do not learn as well as they could. Leaders need to ensure that all pupils have learning targets that are specific, measurable and realistic.
- The proprietor, governors and senior leaders do not have secure enough systems in place for checking the quality of their work. This means that they are unaware if their actions are having the necessary impact on the quality of education that pupils receive. In addition, it makes it difficult for them to respond quickly enough where action is needed. Leaders, including governors, must ensure that there are rigorous checks in place to assure themselves of the effectiveness of their work. This includes compliance with the standards and the impact on pupils' education.

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	148630
DfE registration number	878/6087
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10286142
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	14 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	9
Number of part-time pupils	4
Proprietor	Emma Hosie
Headteacher	Emma Hosie
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,250
Telephone number	07779768661
Website	www.thecopperacademy.co.uk
Email address	emma@thecopperacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 to 30 June 2022

Information about this school

- The Copper Academy is an independent special school. It received its first standard inspection in June 2022.
- The school operates for pupils with SEND. Currently, some pupils on the register have an education, health and care plan. Pupils have a range of medical needs and diagnoses, including those with autism, social, emotional and mental health needs and other disabled learners
- The proprietor is also the headteacher of the school. There is a small governing body.
- Leaders use one unregistered 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.

Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher/special educational needs coordinator and members of the senior leadership team. The lead inspector met with the chair of governors.
- Inspectors considered how well the school protects pupils and keeps them safe, including scrutiny of key documentation, such as the single central record, safeguarding policy and pupils' files.
- Inspectors considered pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. The inspection gathered pupils' views of the school through discussion. Inspectors spoke to four parents on the telephone. The lead inspector took account of the one response to Ofsted's free-text survey.
- There were no responses to the staff or pupil surveys.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English (reading), mathematics, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and the specialist curriculum (hair, beauty and nails). In most deep dives, inspectors discussed the curriculum with the proprietor, visited an example lesson, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work and assessment information. PSHE was observed during other lessons and wider activities.

Inspection team

Jane Dennis, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Paula Marsh

Ofsted Inspector

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 2023