

# Inspection of The Workplace

Down Road, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex TN39 4HS

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Inspection dates: 12 and 13 September 2023

## Overall effectiveness

## Requires improvement

The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Matt Jacobs. This school is part of The SABDEN Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Jo Foulkes, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Gillian Sole.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils speak positively about their time at The Workplace. They feel that staff take the time to understand their needs. Many pupils arrive needing help to manage their behaviour and to communicate positively. Staff model how to form respectful relationships while maintaining high expectations of behaviour. Pupils quickly learn how to treat others with respect and take responsibility for their actions. They are well supported by staff to put things right. Pupils feel safe to ask for help. Staff also seek additional expert support for pupils when they need it.

Pupils keenly study different vocational subjects, including courses in hair and beauty and in construction. On-site resources, such as a fully functional motor mechanic garage and a hair salon, give pupils valuable opportunities to show what they have learned. Pupils take great pride in this work, and many are supported to extend their learning in post-16 education.

However, the 'core' curriculum of science, information and communication technology (ICT), English and mathematics is still in development. Pupils do not consistently develop the knowledge and skills they need in these areas. Pupils who find reading difficult do not get the precise teaching they need to read confidently and fluently. This hinders pupils' ability to learn confidently across the rest of curriculum.

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

The school is in the process of reviewing the curriculum to ensure pupils leave school with the essential knowledge and skills they need. In science, ICT, English and mathematics, the curriculum does not clearly identify what important knowledge pupils must learn. This is particularly unclear in the key stage 3 curriculum. This lack of clarity means that lessons are not always designed to help pupils practise using and applying important skills and knowledge. This hinders how well pupils can remember and connect ideas together. Pupils therefore do not develop a secure foundation of knowledge in these subjects.

There is a wide and ambitious range of vocational courses on offer at the school. The curriculum here is well designed and focused on the interests of pupils. An example of this is teaching pupils to change tyres and strip the engines from cars in the on-site garage. Leaders have recruited specialist teachers to ensure pupils learn from professionals in these fields. Pupils told inspectors that these courses have inspired them to consider careers in these industries.

Those responsible for governance ensure they have an accurate view of the school's areas of development. They hold leaders accountable for taking robust action to improve the curriculum. Non-specialist staff receive support to develop their own subject expertise. A comprehensive training programme helps staff to understand appropriate ways in which they can adapt teaching to meet the needs of all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

When pupils join The Workplace, staff communicate effectively with parents and the mainstream school so that they understand the needs of pupils. This includes identifying the help that pupils with SEND need to learn through the creation of detailed support plans. However, not all staff use these plans consistently. This means some pupils with SEND struggle to engage well with learning.

The school's personal development curriculum successfully promotes an ethos of tolerance and kindness. Pupils talk respectfully about differences and report that discrimination is 'simply not acceptable'. Pupils try new activities through forest school and outdoor education. This improves their self-confidence as well as developing different talents. Within the vocational curriculum, pupils develop business and enterprise skills. This includes building and selling garden planters or valeting cars in the garage. The careers programme provides pupils with impartial guidance about a range of ambitious options when they leave school.

An effective approach to managing behaviour encourages pupils to engage positively in education. Staff develop behaviour support plans with pupils and parents. This process is helping pupils learn to take responsibility for their own conduct. Local representatives from the police and youth groups help pupils understand how to stay safe in the community. The relationships and sex education provision ensures pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of consent.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In the school's 'core' curriculum, the important knowledge and skills that pupils need to know are not yet clearly identified and ordered. As a result, the curriculum is not always implemented in a way that helps pupils connect key ideas or secure their knowledge. The school must continue to review and embed the curriculum in these subjects so that all pupils acquire important knowledge and skills.
- There is not yet a systematic approach to supporting pupils with reading. This means that weaker readers are not supported sufficiently to learn to read confidently and fluently. The school must continue to develop and embed reading support across the curriculum so that pupils get the regular and effective help they need.

## 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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	147855
<b>Local authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10256262
<b>Type of school</b>	Alternative provision
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Gillian Sole
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Jo Foulkes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Matt Jacobs (Executive headteacher)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sabden.org.uk">www.sabden.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The Workplace provides 94 places for pupils in Year 9 through to Year 11 to study an alternative educational provision. While at The Workplace, pupils remain on the roll of their mainstream schools.
- The school is part of The SABDEN Multi Academy Trust.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, staff and pupils. They also spoke with a sample of commissioning schools. The lead inspector also met with the chief executive officer and representatives of the board of trustees. The lead inspector also contacted representatives of East Sussex County Council.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, vocational studies, and personal, social, health and economic education. They discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, teachers and pupils, visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also reviewed plans for other subjects in the curriculum.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire, including the free-text comments. They also took account of the responses to the confidential staff survey and gathered the views of staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed and scrutinised a range of the school's documents, including leaders' plans for improving the school, minutes of trustee meetings, and records of attendance and behaviour incidents.

## Inspection team

Michelle Payne, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Caroline Clarke

Ofsted Inspector

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