

Ofsted's accreditation visit to TCES National Online School

On 8 and 9 November 2023, Ofsted visited TCES National Online School as part of the [Online Education Accreditation Scheme](#). Through this scheme, providers of full-time online education to school-age children in England can apply to the Department for Education (DfE) for accreditation.

Ofsted visits providers to find out whether they meet the minimum standards for online education set by the DfE. This report sets out what we found during our visit on 8 and 9 November 2023. You can find out whether this provider is accredited by the DfE at [Get Information about Schools](#).

Key findings

- TCES National Online School **meets all the minimum standards** for online education.
 - Led by the proprietor, leaders and staff are driven by a strong moral purpose to improve children's academic and pastoral outcomes. They expertly intertwine education and therapy, working tirelessly to identify, reduce and often eliminate the barriers to learning that children have faced.
 - Leaders, including those responsible for governance, are highly skilled and use these skills to hold staff to account, monitor pupils' outcomes and ensure that robust systems are in place to keep pupils safe.
 - Tutors sensitively introduce pupils to an academic curriculum appropriate to their needs. Through careful nurturing, they build pupils' levels of self-confidence and, consequently, their readiness to engage in the range of learning opportunities on offer.
 - Although teaching is of a high quality, curriculum leaders have not yet ensured that planned activities consistently make effective use of the interactive learning opportunities provided by an online curriculum. Additionally, leaders recognise that there is still work to be done in developing materials that fully utilise available technologies for all subjects.
 - Leaders have considered how they will provide opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development, including personal, social and health education (PSHE) and the promotion of fundamental British values. However, systems to ensure coordinated delivery to all pupils, especially those with a more focused curriculum offer, are not yet fully embedded.
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Who is this online provider?

- TCES National Online School is an online social enterprise providing therapeutic education for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils currently accessing the service are aged between 10 and 23 years of age, and the vast majority have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Pupils are placed with the provider either by a local authority or by a registered school.
- The provider caters for pupils who are unable to attend school. This may be for a variety of reasons, including a medical diagnosis, social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, or a permanent exclusion. Additionally, some pupils are awaiting a special school place, as outlined in their EHC plan. Many pupils are neurodivergent and have complex needs relating to comorbidity. Pupils attend for a minimum of six weeks, but the average placement lasts for approximately 28 weeks. On leaving the provider, most pupils are enrolled at a registered school or college. Some pupils, who have achieved leadership qualifications with TCES National Online School, stay on and progress from alumni mentor volunteers to alumni learning mentor employees. No pupils leaving the provider become NEET (not in education, employment or training).
- In line with TCES' other schools and services, TCES National Online School provides for pupils' holistic development through a five-part curriculum: academic and vocational, enrichment, engagement, therapeutic and pupil leadership. The curriculum is designed to meet pupils' educational, therapeutic and SEMH needs and is mapped against the targets in pupils' EHC plans. When joining the provider, pupils are enrolled as full-time learners, with timetables specific to their needs. As they develop trust in their tutors and build in confidence, pupils access an increasing range of learning opportunities.
- Aspects of the provider's broader curriculum, for example SMSC, PSHE and careers education, are delivered through assemblies and optional enrichment activities, such as language club, cooking club and 'Time to Train' sessions.
- Currently, 19 school-age pupils study with TCES National Online School full time. All but one of these pupils have an [education, health and care \(EHC\) plan](#). All children live in England. No school-age pupils study with TCES National Online School part time.
- At the time of this accreditation visit, there were five looked after children on the roll of TCES National Online School.
- There are currently 14 post-16 learners studying with TCES National Online School. All these learners have an EHC plan.

How are pupils taught at TCES National Online School?

- The majority of learning at TCES National Online School takes place during live timetabled lessons. However, as all lessons are recorded, when pupils are unable

to join a lesson, they can attend at a different time. This includes assemblies and extra-curricular/enrichment activities. Additionally, pupils are able to rewatch lessons should they, or their teacher, wish them to do so. This allows pupils to consolidate their learning and develop their confidence.

- During lessons, tutors have their cameras on. This provides pupils with the reassurance that many of them require. Tutors also encourage pupils to have their cameras on, and many do so as their level of confidence grows. Tutors make effective use of online chat facilities for those pupils who find video conferencing overwhelming.
- Tutors know their children extremely well. They make effective use of prior attainment information to plan sequences of learning that are matched to pupils' abilities and emotional needs. In most cases, lessons are on a one-to-one basis until pupils have the confidence to join small groups.
- Live teaching allows for lessons to be interactive. Tutors often use pupils' interests as a starting point and to help them engage in their learning. For example, in one careers session, the tutor used the pupil's interest in ancient history. This led to a positive discussion about the study of classics and what pathways and qualifications may be beneficial for their next steps.
- Leaders and staff have not yet fully considered the adaptations that are required to take curriculum planning and lesson delivery from the physical to the online world. Consequently, staff do not always make effective use of the technology available to them, and this can limit pupils' access to fully interactive online learning opportunities.

What are TCES National Online School's arrangements like for keeping children safe?

- **Ofsted's visits to online providers can give only a limited level of assurance on the effectiveness of safeguarding, compared to our inspections of schools and other providers of face-to-face education and training.** However, we found that the arrangements for keeping children safe at TCES National Online School are appropriate.
- There is a comprehensive safeguarding policy in place that is implemented effectively. The policy pays due regard to the statutory guidance for registered schools that is issued by the Secretary of State, and it takes account of the online nature of the setting. The provider's safeguarding and child protection procedures are strengthened by the effective implementation of other policies, including e-safety/acceptable use of IT equipment, filtering and monitoring and a code of conduct for social media use.
- Leaders, including governors, have a secure understanding of safeguarding and have ensured that a robust culture pervades the setting. Suitability checks are

carried out for staff before they commence employment, including for those staff who only work at the setting temporarily. TCES National Online School does not use supply staff.

- Staff are vigilant and use the knowledge they have gained from frequent training to identify and act on concerns and promote children's well-being.
- Leaders have ensured that the setting's computer networks and devices are secure from cyber-attack and misuse. This includes appropriate monitoring and filtering of the setting's internet connections.

What do pupils and parents and carers think about TCES National Online School?

- Parents are extremely positive about the setting and recognise the impact it is having on their children's engagement with learning. Parents who spoke with inspectors said how happy they are that, after difficult experiences in the past, their children's academic and emotional needs are now being met. One parent stated they felt they had 'got their child back'.
- Parents feel well informed about their children's progress. They told inspectors that communication is timely and responsive to their needs. Parents were confident that should they have any concerns, these would be dealt with effectively and efficiently.
- Pupils stated that they feel safe at the setting. They develop positive attitudes to learning and are typically attentive in their online sessions. Pupils recognise that, due to the strong relationships that adults foster with them, they are able to build their self-confidence and, consequently, their willingness to engage.
- When asked by inspectors, pupils and parents stated that there was nothing they would want to change to improve the setting's provision.

About the visit

- This is TCES National Online School's first accreditation visit. Jonathan Dyer, His Majesty's Inspector (HMI) was the lead inspector, accompanied by John Nixon HMI.

Compliance with the Department for Education's standards for online education

This section reports on how well TCES National Online School meets the standards for online education.

TCES National Online School meets all of the applicable standards for online education set out by the DfE ('the standards'). The standards that are not applicable to TCES National Online School are listed below.

The full list of standards can be found in [DfE's guidance on meeting the online education standards](#).

Standards that do not apply to this provider

The following standards do not apply to this provider:

- **Standard 1.5** only applies where the principal language of instruction is a language other than English.
- **Standards 5.11, 5.12, 5.13, 5.14, 5.15, 5.16, 5.17, 5.18** only apply where the provider uses supply staff.
- **Standards 6.5, 6.10** only apply where a report on the provider has been published under the Online Education Accreditation Scheme at the time of the visit.

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