

Music Stuff

Unit 2, The Cuthbert Centre, 877 Ashton Old Road, Manchester M11 2NA

Inspection dates

23 and 24 January 2024

Overall outcome

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 2, 2(1)–2(1)(b)(i), 3 and 3(a)–3(d)

- At the previous standard inspection in February 2023, inspectors found that the curriculum was weak in some subjects. In these subjects, there was not enough clarity about what should be taught and when this should happen. Also, these subject curriculums did not take account of the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- When the school's action plan was evaluated in November 2023, leaders' plans to improve the quality of education for pupils were not sufficient to address the previously unmet independent school standards (the standards).
- The proprietor has developed an appropriate curriculum policy. This outlines a sufficiently broad range of subjects for pupils to study and details how the curriculum content differs between key stage 3 and key stage 4. The policy demonstrates leaders' approach to providing a flexible and personalised education for each pupil.
- Leaders have given thought to what they want pupils to learn during their time at the school. They have developed schemes of work for each subject. Leaders' curriculum design, in all subjects, takes into account the specific and individual needs of pupils, all of whom are pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- The proprietor has recruited new, subject-specialist staff and staff with experience of working with pupils with SEND. It has invested in a range of ongoing training to build teachers' subject expertise and to support them in the delivery of lessons to pupils. Leaders have worked with staff to develop short-term plans that reflect the curriculum content that is required to be taught. These plans also include consideration of the individual needs of pupils. This is having a positive impact on pupils, who are having their needs better met now. Consequently, pupils are more settled in class and told the inspector that lessons such as history are now more interesting and fun.

- Leaders have trained staff to use assessment information more effectively to inform their lesson planning and delivery. Regular progress-monitoring meetings between leaders and teachers are supportive in identifying and analysing gaps in pupils' learning. This informs teachers' planning. Teachers use their learning from training on how to adapt the curriculum and activities to meet the needs of all pupils well.
- Leaders have put in place some strategies to support pupils who struggle with reading or who are not motivated to read. However, some pupils do not get the help that they need to learn to read fluently and accurately.
- The school now meets the previously unmet requirements of the standard in this part.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 32(1) and 32(1)(c)

- At the previous standard inspection in February 2023, the proprietor and school leaders did not demonstrate the knowledge required to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils in school. They did not carry out timely checks when pupils were absent from school.
- When the school's action plan was evaluated in November 2023, leaders' plans to improve safeguarding arrangements were not sufficient.
- The proprietor and school leaders have reviewed and strengthened the school's safeguarding arrangements. For example, they have appointed an experienced designated safeguarding lead. A suitable and up-to-date safeguarding policy is now in place. This is made available to parents and carers on the school's website.
- The proprietor has appointed an experienced attendance lead. This lead has set up robust systems to identify and respond to pupils' absence promptly. The school's new online system for recording pupils' attendance is being used weekly to analyse patterns of attendance and wider trends. This analysis informs leaders' actions, individual pupils' action plans and, as appropriate, joint working with local authority colleagues.
- Leaders have ensured that all the necessary arrangements to keep pupils safe and to promote their welfare at the school are in place.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 16, 16(a) and 16(b)

- At the previous standard inspection in February 2023, some health and safety procedures were not implemented, and regular safety and maintenance checks did not take place. The proprietor and school leaders did not demonstrate the required knowledge to identify and manage risks. Furthermore, staff were unclear about their roles and responsibilities to clean and maintain the school accommodation. Consequently, the school sites were not well cared for.
- When the school's action plan was evaluated in November 2023, leaders' plans to improve the welfare and health and safety arrangements were not sufficient to meet the relevant standards.
- The proprietor has appointed a dedicated health and safety lead. An external health and safety audit has taken place, and the outcomes have informed the updated health and safety policy. The school's arrangements comply with all relevant laws. Some health and

safety checks are carried out and carefully logged. This includes regular fire safety checks for each school site. The proprietor now fully complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. However, the proprietor has not ensured that all of the premises are clean, tidy and well maintained. This compromises the otherwise effective implementation of the health and safety policy.

- A revised written risk assessment policy is in place and is appropriate. The risk assessments have been updated and now show that leaders take appropriate actions to minimise risks to pupils. These include risk assessments for the school building, staff, events and individual pupils.
- The school does not meet all of the previously unmet requirements of the standard in this part. An independent school standard in this part remains unmet.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(c) and 18(2)(c)(iv)

- At the previous standard inspection in February 2023, leaders did not follow rigorous safer recruitment procedures.
- When the school's action plan was evaluated in November 2023, leaders' plans to address this standard were judged as likely to be met if the actions were implemented.
- The single central record is in place and meets the requirements for the information that it must contain. Leaders understand the need to complete all the required checks on the suitability of staff before any new staff take up their posts.
- The proprietor and school leaders have now completed appropriate training to support the appointment of suitable staff to work in the school. With the support of the local authority, leaders have checked the qualifications of every member of staff currently working in the school. As part of the recruitment process, leaders ensure that certificates for all relevant qualifications are now checked and verified and that any gaps in employment history are fully explained.
- The school now meets the requirements of the previously unmet standard in this part.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1), 23(1)(a), 25, 27, 27(b), 28(1), 28(1)(b) and 28(1)(d)

- At the previous standard inspection in February 2023, pupils were not provided with suitable toilet and washing facilities. In some toilet facilities, there was no hot water, and in others the temperature of the hot water posed a scalding risk. Inspectors also found that the school's premises were not maintained to a suitable standard to ensure the health, safety and welfare of pupils. For example, leaders had not put in place a suitable cleaning regime and some classrooms were untidy. Finally, inspectors found that the proprietor had not provided pupils with a safe, clean space to play outdoors, and nor was there appropriate external lighting.
- When the school's action plan was evaluated in November 2023, it was judged that leaders' plans to rectify and improve the school's premises and accommodation were not sufficient to address these standards.

- At the time of this progress monitoring inspection, some toilet facilities were not suitable. On one site, the designated toilet for girls was located at the front of a classroom and therefore lacked privacy. Girls could choose to go and use the staff toilet instead, but this had not been redesignated for the sole use of pupils. Some toilet facilities were missing soap and others did not have a means of hand-drying.
- There is now hot and cold running water in all toilet facilities. The hot water is at an appropriate temperature.
- The proprietor and school leaders have made some improvements to the school's accommodation. However, in the toilet facilities, some sinks were dirty and soap dispensers were damaged. There was graffiti in some toilets and elsewhere in the school building. In the outside spaces, there was debris that had not been removed, some of which was potentially unsafe, such as glass. At the time of the inspection, leaders had not addressed the issue of a suitable and effective cleaning regime across the school sites.
- The exterior lighting has not been repaired on a number of the school sites.

Paragraphs 29(1) and 29(1)(b)

- The pupils at The Cuthbert Centre sites now have access to an outdoor area. It is an appropriate space in which pupils can play when not in lessons. However, there is no suitable outdoor area for pupils to use at the Fog Lane site.
- The school does not meet all of the previously unmet requirements of the standard in this part.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1)–34(1)(c)

- At the time of the standard inspection in February 2023, leaders did not have the knowledge and skills appropriate to their roles to ensure that all the standards were met consistently. The proprietor had not ensured that leaders fulfilled their responsibilities effectively. It did not ensure that all pupils received an education of sufficient quality to enable them to learn well, including those pupils with SEND. The proprietor had not sufficiently promoted the well-being of pupils.
- In the action plan, which was evaluated in November 2023, it was judged that leaders' plans to address this standard were likely to be met if the actions were implemented.
- The proprietor and school leaders have made some improvements. They have thought carefully about the curriculum that they offer pupils. They have paid particular attention to ensuring that the curriculum meets the needs of pupils, including those with SEND and those with an EHC plan. They have acted swiftly and decisively to remedy unmet standards related to safeguarding, including in relation to pupils' attendance.
- Leaders have set up a suitable, regular cycle of quality assurance and checks on the quality of education, safeguarding and many elements of welfare and health and safety. The proprietor has set up a governing body. It has also established systems to ensure that leaders at all levels are regularly held accountable for their work, responsibilities and the ongoing development of the school. This includes regular checks to ensure that the standards are met.

- However, there are still some standards that remain unmet. These relate to the school's premises and accommodation and the welfare and health and safety of pupils. The proprietor does not demonstrate that it has the knowledge or skills to meet the standards consistently. Also, it has not fulfilled its responsibilities to promote the well-being of pupils.
- The school does not meet all of the previously unmet requirements of the standard in this part. The standard in this part remains unmet.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection, as set out in the annex of this report. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

School details

Unique reference number	137887
DfE registration number	352/6006
Inspection number	10320994

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	90
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Music Stuff
Chair	Andrew Portersmith
Headteacher	Lyndsey Murray (interim headteacher)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£11,000 to £27,500
Telephone number	07854 585046
Website	www.musicstuffeducation.org
Email address	l.murray@musicstuffeducation.org
Date of previous standard inspection	7 to 9 February 2023

Information about this school

- The school's previous standard inspection took place from 7 to 9 February 2023.
- The address registered for this school is Unit 2, The Cuthbert Centre, 877 Ashton Old Road, Manchester M11 2NA. The school also operates from four other sites: Unit 1, The Cuthbert Centre, 877 Ashton Old Road, Manchester M11 2NA and Units 3–4, The Cuthbert Centre, 877 Ashton Old Road, Manchester M11 2NA, which are both situated at the same location as the main site. The two other premises are at other locations in Manchester: Fog Lane, Burnage, Manchester M20 6FJ and Wilbraham Road, Fallowfield, Manchester

M14 6JU. The school recently closed the school site at 599 Ashton New Road, Clayton, Manchester M11 4UA.

- The school has been led by an interim headteacher since January 2024. Since the previous standard inspection, there have continued to be additions and changes to leadership roles.
- The school's current number of pupils on roll exceeds the capacity of 70 agreed by the Department for Education (DfE).
- All pupils at this school have social, emotional and mental health needs. Some pupils have an EHC plan.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection. The inspection also considered the wider issues related to a complaint against the provider sent to the DfE.
- This was the first progress monitoring inspection since the standard inspection in February 2023. It was conducted without notice.
- The DfE required the school to prepare an action plan. This plan was statutory. Ofsted evaluated this plan on 10 November 2023. The DfE rejected this action plan.
- The inspector met with the headteacher. She also met with other senior leaders, as well as staff, including those responsible for safeguarding and health and safety.
- The inspector met with the chair of the proprietor body and a member of the governing body. She spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector toured the school premises and looked at a wide variety of documentation in relation to the standards checked.
- As well as visiting some lessons across the five sites, the inspector looked at curriculum plans and schemes of work, examples of pupils' work and the curriculum policy.
- The inspector spoke with pupils.
- The inspector examined policy documents, including the safeguarding policy, the single central record and the accessibility plan.

Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Standards that were not met at the previous inspection and remain unmet at this inspection

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 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.

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.
- 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.
- 27 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 27(b) external lighting is provided in order to ensure that people can safely enter and leave the school premises.
- 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)(b) pupils to play outside.

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 school now meets 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.
- 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.

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.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005[12].
- 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)(c) the proprietor carries out appropriate checks to confirm in respect of each such person–
 - 18(2)(c)(iv) where appropriate, the person's qualifications.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 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)(d) the temperature of hot water at the point of use does not pose a scalding risk to users.

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