

# Inspection of College Central

124 Brodrick Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN22 9RB

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Inspection dates: 6 and 7 February 2024

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Inadequate**

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The quality of education

**Inadequate**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Inadequate**

Personal development

**Inadequate**

Leadership and management

**Inadequate**

Previous inspection grade

Good

The executive headteacher of this school is Matt Jacobs, who is responsible for this school over four sites and one other school in the trust. This school is part of 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, Joanne Foulkes, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Gillian Sole.

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

Pupils in the secondary phase do not feel safe coming to school. Dangerous and disruptive behaviour is common. Foul and abusive language often goes unchallenged. Poor behaviour disrupts learning frequently. The school's behaviour policy is not effective. Staff have not been trained appropriately to manage challenging behaviour. Pupils frequently ignore requests from staff to behave in an acceptable way.

The trust says it has high expectations for every pupil. However, well-intentioned staff lack the support and skills to put the trust's vision into practice. Pupils in the secondary phase do not share the trust's high expectations of them. They feel that the school has given up on them. Pupils who are disadvantaged, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not receive the support they need in the secondary phase. As a result, they achieve poorly.

Younger primary-aged pupils in the foundation learning provision (FLP) enjoy learning. They behave well because there are clear routines in place, and they know what is expected of them. Here, pupils feel safe and are cared for well. Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful and warm. New pupils settle into the FLP quickly.

The school's expectations are too low in the secondary phase. Most pupils do not attend school regularly enough. All pupils at the Hastings site study a part-time timetable. Many of these pupils do not participate in the compulsory online learning. Crucially, not all pupils have access to a suitable and rich set of experiences to support their wider development. While a small number of pupils benefit from activities such as kickboxing, swimming and outdoor and adventurous activities, the majority do not.

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

The Sabden Multi-Academy Trust has not made the vital improvements needed in this school, particularly in the secondary phase. Trustees and senior trust leaders recognise the school's failings but have exhausted their strategies for improvement. As a result, the trust is currently seeking to transfer the school to another trust. The school has suffered from high levels of staff absence during the past three months. There have been violent attacks on staff that have left many staff feeling unsafe. The trust and the local authority have differing views about how many pupils should attend College Central. Growing numbers of secondary pupils at the school have put additional pressure on staffing ratios.

The school benefits from successful partnerships with other trust schools to provide a coherent curriculum in the FLP. Here, pupils learn vital knowledge and skills, which helps to prepare them for the next stage of their education. Pupils at the early stages of reading in the FLP receive strong support. The books match the sounds pupils know. This helps them to practise reading and gain confidence quickly.

Support for pupils in the secondary phase who are at the earlier stages of reading is not fully effective. As a result, these pupils struggle to access the curriculum.

The curriculum is not ambitious in the secondary phase. Pupils experience a narrowed and incoherent curriculum. Pupils do not have access to a broad range of qualifications to prepare them for future education or employment. Teachers are frequently not able to promote effective learning because of the unruly behaviour of pupils. The curriculum is often too easy for pupils or does not take account of their prior learning. As a result, pupils are often very disengaged. Checks on pupils' learning are not thorough and do not identify gaps in pupils' knowledge or their misconceptions. In some subjects, for example mathematics and personal, social and health education (PSHE), the school has considered what knowledge and skills pupils need to learn. However, in PSHE, the school has not taken account of when pupils should learn vital aspects such as how to keep themselves safe. Staff have not received crucial training to deliver PSHE or relationships and sex education (RSE). This means that pupils do not have the crucial knowledge and skills they need for life in modern Britain.

Staff in the secondary phase do not always have access to pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans. As a result, pupils with SEND do not receive necessary and appropriate support. However, in the FLP, the needs of pupils with SEND are identified accurately. As a result, they receive tailored support and achieve well.

The trust has acknowledged some of the failings of the school but has not taken sufficient steps to address them. The action that has been taken is too slow, and pupils in the secondary phase continue to be let down as vital areas of the provision require rapid improvement. Staff do not feel supported by the trust and the school. Many staff do not feel listened to when they raise concerns. The school's capacity to improve is very limited, although this is stronger in the FLP. Some key staff are new in post and do not get the support they need to make the necessary improvements.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Pupils and staff do not feel safe in the secondary phase because of very poor and sometimes violent behaviour that is not managed effectively. Pupils who do not attend school regularly are not contacted frequently enough, so they could be at risk of significant harm. Too many pupils are on part-time timetables, with no clear plans for them to return to full-time education.

The school does not respond to potentially dangerous incidents rapidly or robustly enough. School property in the secondary phase is regularly broken, stolen or damaged wilfully. Systems to account for potentially dangerous but vital specialist equipment are not sufficient. The school has begun to tackle this issue recently, but the response has not been robust or thorough enough.

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

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

- Pupils in the secondary phase are not safe. The trust and the school have not followed statutory guidance to protect the most vulnerable pupils from risk of significant harm. The school must take immediate action to ensure that pupils, particularly those who do not attend school, are safeguarded properly.
- Pupils' behaviour in the secondary phase is often dangerous and sometimes violent. The trust and the school have done too little to tackle the widespread dangerous behaviour that pupils exhibit. Pupils are worried about getting physically hurt because of the poor behaviour. Lessons are frequently disrupted. Furthermore, too often, the use of foul and abusive language goes unchallenged. The trust and the school need to take immediate action to ensure that staff are appropriately trained and are confident to tackle dangerous, antisocial and disrespectful behaviour in the secondary phase.
- Staff do not feel safe in the secondary phase. The trust and the school do not handle concerns about potentially dangerous incidents robustly enough and do not have appropriate oversight of concerns raised by staff. The trust and the school must take immediate action to ensure that staff are safe and that their concerns are listened to.
- Too many pupils in the secondary phase are absent from school and do not access online learning. The school's work to address these issues is having limited impact, and improvements are too slow overall. The school and the trust need to establish strategies to raise attendance rapidly so that pupils are in school and learning.
- The curriculum is too narrow in the secondary phase and does not meet the needs of all pupils. Teaching does not support pupils, particularly those with SEND, to learn new knowledge and skills effectively. Staff are not trained to use critical information in pupils' EHC plans and often do not have access to them. The trust and the school must ensure that pupils access an ambitious curriculum that is coherently sequenced and enables pupils to build knowledge and skills. In addition, the school must ensure that teachers are trained in how to take account of pupils' additional needs and different starting points.
- A significant number of pupils do not benefit from a varied, rich set of experiences. There is no systematic approach to catering for pupils' wider development in the secondary phase, and too many pupils miss out on valuable opportunities. As a result, pupils are not prepared for life in modern Britain. The trust and the school must ensure there is a comprehensive programme of PSHE and RSE implemented as soon as possible. In addition, staff must receive appropriate training to deliver critical elements of this effectively.
- The trust has not secured improvement over time and has implemented changes that are unsuitable and do not meet the needs of pupils in the secondary phase. The trust should ensure that, throughout its tenure, this school has the full

benefit of its combined resources to provide pupils with the care, support and education they deserve.

Having considered the evidence, we strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.

## **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

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| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 142143   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                     | East Sussex  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                   | 10296420   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Pupil referral unit  |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Academy alternative phase converter  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 4 to 16  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 144  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | Board of trustees  |
| <b>Chair of trust</b>                      | Gillian Sole   |
| <b>CEO of trust</b>                        | Joanne Foulkes   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Matt Jacobs (Executive Headteacher)  |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.sabden.org.uk/361/welcome">www.sabden.org.uk/361/welcome</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>         | 28 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005                          |

## Information about this school

- College Central is part of the Sabden Multi-Academy Trust, which has five schools in and around East Sussex.
- The school is organised over four sites. The Hastings and Eastbourne sites currently house pupils in Years 7 to 11. The FLP for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is located in two other schools run by the trust: Cuckmere House School and New Horizons School.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider that supports online learning for many pupils.
- The executive headteacher was appointed in September 2023.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- 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 the executive headteacher, the chief executive officer and other leaders.
- The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the chair of the trustees and representatives from the local authority.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; looked at training records and documentation related to safeguarding and behaviour; 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.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation, published information about pupils' performance and minutes of trustees' meetings.
- Inspectors spoke to a wide range of pupils and observed their behaviour in lessons and at social times.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the staff survey and gathered the views of staff and pupils throughout the inspection.

## Inspection team

Linda Culling, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Harry Ingham

His Majesty's Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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