

Inspection of Central Education Ltd

Yew Tree Farm, Nash Lane, Scaynes Hill, Haywards Heath RH17 7NJ

Inspection dates: 9 to 11 July 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel safe at Central Education. Many have previously had negative experiences of schooling and have missed considerable chunks of their learning. They describe the school community as a 'family' and welcome the time and attention they are given. However, too many do not come to school often enough.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils' conduct. Pupils are well looked after by the dedicated team of staff who care deeply about them. Pupils get to explore their talents, such as fishing, golf and gardening, with staff who share the same interests. Pastoral support is strong. Pupils choose their own mentors and learn to trust adults to help them manage and resolve conflicts, including instances of bullying. This helps them re-engage successfully into education, gaining the qualifications they need to access further study.

Pupils value the specialist opportunities the school offers, such as metal work and wood turning. The school's horticultural garden provides a sense of pride for the pupils who are keen to share the produce with visitors. For many, these experiences open the door for potential career options they had not considered previously. However, the school's ambition for pupils' achievement in some other subjects is not realised. Pupils do not learn consistently well across all curriculum subjects.

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

Leaders, including the proprietor, have a clear vision for pupils to gain qualifications and life skills necessary for employment. Since the last inspection, the school has moved to a new premises and revised aspects of the curriculum to meet its vision. In most subjects, the school's curriculum is carefully planned. It identifies what should be taught and when. However, this work is not yet complete for all subjects. As a result, pupils' learning across the curriculum as a whole is not yet good enough.

Pupils study a broad curriculum of both academic and specialist subjects. Where subject leaders are more established, the planned lesson activities build on pupils' prior learning well. The school's planned vocational curriculum reflects leaders' high ambition. Pupils learn skills in horticulture, wood and metal work. These subjects are well matched to pupils' interests and are delivered skilfully by teachers with the required subject-specific expertise.

Alongside the specialist vocational curriculum, the school has ensured that pupils also study a range of academic subjects. In most lessons, the work given to pupils helps them to learn the intended curriculum well. However, some members of staff are new to the school. They have not had the training they need to deliver the curriculum confidently.

Pupils access a comprehensive personal development programme as part of their curriculum. They learn about healthy relationships and consent in an age-appropriate way. The curriculum is adapted well to address individual issues and

pupils are provided with personalised support from their mentors. In separate citizenship lessons, staff encourage pupils to discuss current affairs and moral issues. Pupils visit a range of local colleges and receive careers information and guidance to discuss their future and aspirations. This helps them make well-informed decisions about their next steps in education.

Pupils at the earliest stage of learning to read are supported well. The school has adopted an appropriate phonics programme. Revisions to the English programme have placed a renewed emphasis on high-quality texts. These texts provide a focus for writing and for engaging discussions. As a result, many pupils read with fluency and choose to read for pleasure.

During learning, adults provide effective checks on pupils' understanding. They use what this tells them to adapt their explanations to help pupils understand new knowledge. However, assessment information is not used consistently well across all subjects. Staff are not always clear about what pupils have learned before and what needs to come next. This means some activities do not enable pupils to build securely on their understanding. As a result, pupils learning across the school's curriculum is inconsistent.

The school has a clear understanding of each pupil's special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Recent changes to plans have improved provision in lessons to support pupils' access to learning. Leaders work closely with parents and carers, and a wide range of specialist external partners, to make sure that pupils receive the support that they need.

The school environment is calm. Staff are skilled at supporting pupils with high needs. Typically, pupils engage well in lessons. When needed, pupils make use of the school grounds, to manage their emotions. Pupils are given a voice and they learn it is important to share their feelings. That being said, not enough pupils attend school regularly. Leaders work closely with parents and external agencies and, for some pupils, this has had a demonstrable impact on their attendance. However, leaders acknowledge they do not have sufficient oversight of attendance and this impacts on their ability to proactively address absence.

The proprietor has ensured that all the independent school standards are met consistently and securely. The school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. However, leaders do not always have a strong enough oversight of the impact of planned actions, limiting the levels of challenge provided to leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- In some subjects, the building blocks of learning have not been identified clearly. This means that, at times, work is not focused well on what pupils need to know, which prevents them from building on their prior learning. The school should make sure that the important knowledge is identified clearly in all subjects and is sequenced well so that pupils can deepen their learning over time.
- In some subjects, assessment procedures do not provide teachers with meaningful and useful information. Some pupils do not have the precise teaching and support they need to catch up across the curriculum. The school should ensure that assessment systems are in place for all subjects and provide teachers with information which benefits pupils' learning.
- Many members of staff are new and have not received all the training they need to deliver the curriculum with confidence. The school should ensure all staff have the training they need, including phonics training, to support pupils successfully across the curriculum.
- Attendance needs to improve. Pupils are missing too much of their learning. The school needs to improve its strategic oversight of attendance so that timely and effective actions lead to pupils coming to school more often.
- Leaders, including the proprietor, do not check carefully enough on the impact of their work. Consequently, they have not acted quickly enough to address some of the gaps in their provision. The school should make sure that they develop systems and processes to monitor their work more effectively so that they can make the improvements needed in a timely way.

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	126149
DfE registration number	938/6249
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10322063
Type of school	Special school
School category	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	18
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Geoffrey Wyatt
Headteacher	Mark Gill
Annual fees (day pupils)	£36,000
Telephone number	01444 450 111
Website	www.centraleducation.org.uk
Email address	info@centraleducation.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	1 to 3 November 2022

Information about this school

- Central Education provides for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs. Many pupils have additional needs associated with autism or dyslexia. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Most pupils have been excluded from their previous schools.
- The school caters for secondary-aged boys and girls. At the time of the inspection, all current pupils have been placed by West Sussex.
- The current proprietor, who established Central Education Limited in September 2018, set up the school in 1991.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provision, Bright Sparks, 49 Ewhurst Road BN2 4AJ.

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.

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

- Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings with the principal, other senior leaders, and teaching staff in the school. The lead inspector met with the proprietor.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, personal, social and health education, and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, looked at samples of pupils' work and EHC plans.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils around the school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour throughout the inspection, including during breaktimes. They assessed the school's culture to keep pupils safe throughout the inspection. A wide range of documentation was considered, including policies, staff training records and documentation associated with the school meeting all aspects of the independent school standards. The single central record of checks on the suitability of adults to work with children was also scrutinised.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors spoke to the safeguarding leader and scrutinised a wide range of information, including a selection of the school's

records. They also spoke to staff about safeguarding and looked at how pupils learn to keep safe.

- Inspectors reviewed the responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and spoke to a small number of parents.

The school’s proposed change to the maximum number of pupils

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a ‘material change’ to its registration. At the DfE’s request, we checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The school has requested an increase of 12 pupils expanding its maximum number of pupils from 18 to 30.
- In order to consider the request, inspectors toured the premises. They reviewed arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils. Inspectors also considered the suitability of staff, including the proprietor, and the quality of leadership and management of the school.
- The newly developed school site has been designed to provide the learning space required for the additional pupils requested. The proprietor has ensured the new provision has adequate staffing. However, leaders do not currently have sufficient oversight of some aspects of pupils’ welfare to be confident that it would remain fit for purpose if the number on roll increases by 12 pupils.
- The outcome of this part of the inspection is the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if a smaller material change of six additional pupils is implemented.

Information about the material change inspection

- In considering the requested material change, inspectors took account of a potential increase in numbers when reviewing the independent school standards relating to welfare, health and safety, recruitment checks, premises and leadership and management.

Inspection team

Laura James, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Laurie Anderson

His Majesty’s Inspector

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