

# Inspection of Alternative Centre of Education

45/51 Market Square, Edmonton Green, London N9 0TZ

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Inspection dates: 24 to 26 September 2024

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**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

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

The school strives to improve the life chances of pupils. Pupils arrive having had negative prior experiences of school. They also typically struggle with their behaviour. Staff take time to understand pupils' complex social, emotional and mental health needs. They use this knowledge effectively to build strong working and trusting relationships with pupils. As a result, pupils settle well. They feel safe and begin to value the opportunities that they have to gain new knowledge.

The school uses a range of strategies to help pupils develop constructive social skills. It does plentiful work to support pupils' character development. This is aimed at enabling them to function positively in society. This also leads to a calm and purposeful environment in the school, making it a conducive place for study. There are times when pupils get dysregulated and need help to manage their emotions and behaviour. When this happens, staff intervene with dignity and skill. They show both effective behaviour management skills and respect for each pupil. Consequently, pupils regain their emotional equilibrium. They return quickly to work in the classroom.

The school's work is underpinned by high expectations. It ensures that pupils leave this school well prepared for the future. They either return to mainstream schools or go on to post-16 provisions.

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

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Typically, pupils have had very poor prior attendance at their previous schools. This means that they tend to arrive at this school with much less knowledge than would be typical for their age. The school does extensive work to help pupils to overcome their barriers to attendance. It also strives to develop pupils' positive behaviours and attitudes. With the strong pastoral care that they receive, pupils' attendance and behaviour markedly improve. This, in turn, means that pupils attend lessons more often, helping them to gain new knowledge and skills.

The school has put much thought into planning a well-sequenced and ambitious curriculum. The school carries out a range of checks on learning when pupils arrive. Staff carefully identify where pupils have gaps in their prior knowledge. Staff are adept at using the information plans to design a bespoke curriculum to meet each pupil's needs, drawing on the school's curriculum thinking in each subject. Staff regularly check on what pupils have learned and review their individual targets. Suitable changes to teaching and support are made as needed.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They ensure that pupils revise new learning often. Therefore, pupils embed knowledge in their long-term memories. Teachers help pupils to understand how learning in one subject can be beneficial in others. For example, knowledge and skills gained in mathematics helped pupils to understand Newton's Law in science.

The school's systems for supporting pupils who are pre-verbal or at early stages of speaking are effective. A skilfully taught phonics programme is in place for primary pupils who need to catch up. Assessments to check exactly which letter sounds pupils know and can apply to reading words fluently and those they struggle with are rigorous, especially in the primary phase. This means that extra help is well targeted and pupils learn to read with confidence and fluency. In the secondary phase, teaching tends to focus more on checking pupils' comprehension skills and less so on identifying and responding to specific gaps in phonics knowledge. This means, at times, some pupils do not get the exact support that they need to gain reading fluency quickly. Some pupils arrive with clear and legible writing and a secure ability to spell. However, this is not the case for some other pupils. Although the school provides pupils with support to address these difficulties, this support is not as effective as it could be. This means that those pupils do not improve and secure their reading and writing skills as quickly as they can. This also limits their access to the wider curriculum.

The school provides pupils with a wide personal development programme. Staff do extensive work to build pupils' characters and prepare them for life in modern Britain. Pupils have opportunities to discuss a range of topical issues such as body image, peer pressure and misogyny. They are taught about people with protected characteristics and different faiths. They have opportunities to visit the local community and museums.

Secondary pupils have access to impartial careers guidance and advice. Older pupils visit a careers fair and an apprenticeship fair. They have the opportunity to study an employability-accredited course. The school is also planning to arrange for work experience in the summer. Pupils who leave at the end of Year 11 go on to study a range of post-16 courses such as sport and health, bricklaying and social care.

Staff feel valued and said that workload expectations are reasonable. They welcome the openness and approachability of school leaders and how they are supported to carry out their roles.

The proprietor is also the head of centre. She is based at the school and has strategic oversight of all aspects of the school's work. She ensures that all stakeholders, including parents and carers, buy into the school's vision and ethos. She has established strong working relationships with external agencies, the local authority and a range of school leaders who send their pupils to this provision.

The school meets the independent school standards. The accessibility plan complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- A few pupils who join this school with very low reading and writing skills are not routinely supported well enough to catch up as quickly as they can. This means they continue to struggle to access the curriculum fully. They are also unable to produce written work of a high quality. The school should ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills to help those pupils gain the foundational reading and writing fluency that they need to study successfully.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	143036
<b>DfE registration number</b>	308/6006
<b>Local authority</b>	Enfield
<b>Inspection number</b>	10342113
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent school
<b>School category</b>	Independent day school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	21
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Alternative Centre of Education Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Glendene Griffith
<b>Headteacher</b>	Chantelle Scantlebury
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£18,525 to £36,075
<b>Telephone number</b>	02037935302
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.acoe.org.uk/">www.acoe.org.uk/</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:support@aco.org.uk">support@aco.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	14 to 16 September 2021

## Information about this school

- Since the previous standard inspection, there has been a large turnover of staff. The new headteacher took up her post in September 2021. The Department for Education approved the school's request, considered during the previous standard inspection, to change its registration to allow for an extra 12 pupils and extend the age range from 11 to 16 to seven to 16. The primary-age pupils are sited in a refurbished building next to the secondary school.
- The school caters for pupils with a history of disrupted schooling, mainly owing to behavioural and social difficulties. The pupils who attend the school have been referred, in the main, by Enfield local authority, and some directly by mainstream schools.
- Many pupils join at various points during the academic year. Most of these pupils remain on roll at their previous mainstream school.
- All pupils have SEND, and most also have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not have a governing body. The head of centre is also the proprietor of the school.
- The school does not use any other alternative provision.

## 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.

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

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading and writing, mathematics, humanities and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. They also considered other subjects as part of this inspection.
- Inspectors met with the proprietor, the headteacher and other senior staff. They also had formal meetings with groups of staff and spoke with pupils. Inspectors had telephone conversations with a representative of the local authority and the headteacher of one of the mainstream schools that send pupils to this alternative

provision.

- 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.
- To check the school's compliance with the independent school standards, inspectors carried out a range of activities, including meeting with leaders, a site walk to check the premises, looking at the content on the school's website and scrutinising the school's records and documentation.
- There were no responses to the parent, staff and pupil surveys.

### **Inspection team**

David Radomsky, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Francis Gonzalez

Ofsted Inspector

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