Inspection of Big Creative Independent School

Uplands House, Blackhorse Lane, Walthamstow E17 5QJ

Inspection dates:	10 to 12 June 2025

Overall effectiveness	**Good**
The quality of education	**Good**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Outstanding**
Personal development	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Good**
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 have a strong sense of belonging at this school. They value the positive, respectful relationships that exist between staff and pupils. Pupils are confident that if they have a worry, however small, that staff will listen and help them. This helps pupils to feel happy and secure.

The school is ambitious for pupils to enjoy learning and to re-engage with education. Teachers take the time to get to know pupils' interests and past experiences in detail. Pupils who may have had a disrupted schooling receive highly personalised support. This prepares them well for the next steps in their learning journey.

Pupils' personal development is the 'heartbeat' of the school. It is carefully woven across all aspects of the curriculum and school life. The school provides pupils with educational experiences that develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils show high levels of self-control. Behaviour in classrooms and during social times is impressive.

The school is determined that pupils acquire the knowledge and skills needed to complete national qualifications, such as GCSEs and functional skills in mathematics and English. It ensures pupils succeed in a variety of subjects, including science and music.

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

A high number of pupils arrive at different times during the school year. Therefore, some pupils have significant gaps in their learning due to periods of absence from education. The school has processes in place to check pupils' needs and starting points as soon as they join. This means that teachers are knowledgeable of pupils' strengths and areas for development. The school works with external professionals, such as speech and language therapists and educational psychologists. These experts support the school in identifying pupils' individual needs accurately. This ensures that teaching is effective, so pupils achieve well and access all that the school has to offer.

The school has in place a well-designed curriculum. Leaders have identified the important skills, knowledge and vocabulary that pupils need to learn and when. Learning is logically ordered and builds on previous learning. For instance, pupils use a music editing programme to enhance their music production skills. With this knowledge, pupils use editing software to manipulate sounds.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. They explain new concepts clearly, carefully breaking down new learning into logical steps. However, sometimes pupils do not have enough opportunity to respond to teacher feedback and correct foundational errors highlighted in their written work. In addition, on occasion, some pupils do not complete written work, and teachers do not notice errors quickly enough. As a result, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge and skills.

The school has effective strategies in place to identify pupils who find reading more difficult. Tailored reading support helps pupils catch up quickly and read fluently. Therefore, pupils become confident readers and access reading materials across subjects effectively. The school needs to continue its work to encourage pupils to read widely and develop a love of reading.

Pupils are highly motivated and show positive attitudes to their learning. They are resilient and do not give up when faced with challenging tasks. Teachers have high expectations for behaviour. Routines are firmly established, and learning is not interrupted. Pupils take great care to help new pupils settle into school life quickly. Attendance remains a priority for the school. Leaders provide targeted support for pupils after they join the school. This careful support ensures that pupils' attendance improves significantly from their starting points.

Personal development is an important part of the school's work. Carefully planned visits to art galleries, farms, the Houses of Parliament and television studios enhance the curriculum. Pupils learn the importance of democracy. They practise democracy by voting for their classmates to be the student ambassador. This develops pupils' understanding of fairness and equality. The school has a structured and thoughtful approach to careers education. Pupils receive bespoke guidance about routes into further education and different career paths. This reinforces the school's belief that there are no limits to what pupils can achieve.

Pupils learn how to identify risks within and beyond the school. External professionals deliver workshops on grooming and online risks. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and consent in an age-appropriate manner.

The proprietor and school leaders have acted effectively in order to address weaknesses in the curriculum identified at the last standard inspection. Staff are extremely positive about the school. They appreciate the support they receive from school leaders to manage their workload. The proprietor has appropriate oversight of the school and has ensured that all the independent school standards (the school standards) are met. The proprietor adheres to 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)

- Some teachers do not give pupils enough time to act on feedback about their work. In addition, some teachers do not ensure that checks on pupils' learning spot important errors in pupils' work. This means that some pupils have gaps in their learning. The school needs to ensure that teachers spot errors in pupils'

work and give pupils enough time to act on feedback so that pupils reinforce and deepen important learning.

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	141411
DfE registration number	320/6005
Local authority	London Borough of Waltham Forest
Inspection number	10375108
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	14 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	16
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Alexis Michaelides
Headteacher	Ian Morton
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,383
Telephone number	020 3873 5800
Website	https://bcis.education
Email address	ian.morton@bigcreative.education
Dates of previous inspection	27 to 29 June 2023

Information about this school

- Big Creative Independent School is an alternative education provider for pupils in Years 10 and 11 who have an interest in creative music and media. The school caters for pupils with a history of disrupted schooling. Pupils are referred to this school by local authorities. Pupils may join the school at any point during the school year. A significant number of pupils have education, health and care plans.
- Since the previous standard inspection in June 2023, the school has received one progress monitoring inspection in February 2024. The school met all the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection.
- All pupils are on a dual-registration agreement with their local authority secondary schools.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school is part of the BCE group, which includes BCE training and the BCE Academy (a 16 to 19 academy). It shares the building, some teachers, policies and pupils' services with BCE training. The proprietor and headteacher are both directors of the BCE group.

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 evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other leaders. The lead inspector had meetings with the proprietor.
- 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.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science and music production and performance. 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. Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.

- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text responses. Inspectors also took account of responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.
- Inspectors toured the school site to gather evidence about compliance with the standards. Inspectors also reviewed a range of other documents and policies, including on the school's website.

Inspection team

Deborah Walters, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Hannah Glossop	His Majesty's Inspector

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