



Office for Standards
in Education

The Education Centre

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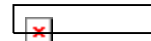
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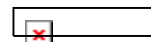
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Introduction and summary

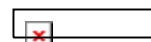


Purpose and scope of the inspection



This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

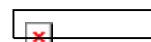


The Education Centre is an independent day special school that caters for pupils aged 13 to 16 who have severe emotional and behavioural difficulties. All pupils have previously attended several maintained special and mainstream schools. Almost all have been out of full-time education for periods up to nine months or more before they are admitted to The Education Centre. There are currently 38 pupils on roll, 33 boys and 5 girls, most of whom come from East or West Sussex. Pupils are grouped according to their age into classes of up to ten pupils. There are currently four classes but next term an additional eight Year 8 and 9 pupils will be admitted and a new teaching group will be established. All pupils have a statement of special educational need and all are funded by their local education authorities. Most pupils join the school during Year 9 and stay until the end of Year 11.

The school obtained final registration in September 1992. The school is in the centre of Haywards Heath in close proximity to the railway station. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2003 and since then there have been a number of other staff changes.

The Education Centre aims to improve the pupils' basic skills; encourage their social and academic learning; use assessments, knowledge and previous experience to plan lessons that will engage all pupils and develop a desire to learn; ensure that all of the staff have the up-to-date skills and knowledge needed to meet the pupils' needs fully; and develop positive relationships with young people that will encourage a belief in a positive future.

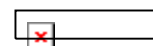
Summary of main findings



The Education Centre is currently facing some challenges which are affecting the curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning provided. New members of staff have recently been appointed and the number of pupils on roll has been increasing throughout this term and last term. At present the new headteacher has a high teaching commitment and has not yet had the opportunity to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and learning. As a result there are inconsistencies in practice and quality. Where teaching is good, pupils behave in an appropriate manner, they concentrate for short periods of time and make satisfactory gains in their learning. By

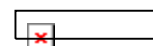
Year 11, the majority of pupils who attend regularly have more control over their behaviour. They show interest in most lessons and are able to concentrate for longer periods of time. Most pupils achieve accreditation in external examinations and a good proportion move on to local colleges at the end of Year 11. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good; most pupils enjoy school and attend regularly. However, although staff encourage pupils to reflect on their behaviour and its outcomes, and to distinguish right from wrong a significant minority of the pupils who attend regularly are disruptive and at times their behaviour has a detrimental effect on other pupils' concentration and learning.

What the school does well:



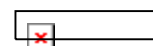
- the staff form a hard-working team. They have friendly relationships with pupils and are committed to caring for and supporting them in their personal, social and academic development;
- the school offers pupils the opportunity to achieve a good range of Entry Level Certificates and General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSEs);
- older pupils achieve well in English, art and woodwork because the quality of teaching is good;
- pupils who attend regularly are prepared well for life after school;
- there is effective provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
- the appearance of corridors and some classrooms is enhanced by well- presented and colourful displays of pupils' written work and art work; and
- the school makes good provision for pupils to receive support from a part-time educational psychologist.

What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations:

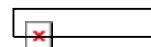


- improve curriculum content and planning as detailed in Section 1;
- improve the quality of teaching so that all lessons are well planned, time is used effectively and the needs of all pupils are taken into account;
- develop and implement the school's policies on off-site visits and sanctions as outlined in Section 3;
- ensure that all staff are appointed and checked according to the procedures detailed in Section 4;
- improve the premises and accommodation so that safety issues are addressed and arrangements for the provision for outdoor space are met;
- provide information for parents on discipline and exclusions, and when requested on the sanctions adopted when pupils misbehave; and
- improve the procedures for handling complaints so that the requirements set out in Section 7 are met.

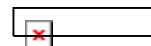
Compliance with the regulations for registration



1. The quality of education provided by the school



The quality of the curriculum



There is a strong focus on pupils achieving success in Entry Level Certificates, GCSEs and other locally accredited courses in English, mathematics, art, graphical material studies and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Information and communication technology (ICT) and citizenship are also included in the curriculum for all pupils.

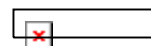
The breadth of the curriculum has been reduced during this academic year as a result of staffing difficulties. As a result the curriculum does not cover all the required areas. Currently, science is not taught and there are insufficient opportunities for physical education. Pupils earn points throughout the week which enable them to spend two afternoons on chosen options. A good range of physical activities are offered through the option system. However, unless pupils earn the necessary points and select a physical option they do not take part in any physical activity.

Most schemes of work for older pupils are based appropriately on examination requirements. However, there is insufficient subject planning for pupils in Years 8 and 9. The lack of appropriately structured schemes of work and systems for assessing pupils' achievement adversely affects their continuity of learning and the progress they make. The narrow curriculum, combined with the inadequate planning, means that the curriculum for pupils in Key Stage 3 does not fulfil the requirements detailed in some statements of special educational need.

There is no written overall curriculum policy. However, pupils' timetables reflect an appropriate emphasis on English, mathematics and PSHE. Pupils' personal and social skills are promoted by staff throughout the day, both in lessons and during break times. These skills are reinforced further in the more effective tutorial sessions and through the work of the part-time educational psychologist who supports identified pupils and groups of pupils. Pupils benefit from being able to meet regularly with him to discuss and reflect on their difficulties. They are keen to speak to him and they find the support he offers helps them to cope with their problems.

The school has developed good practice in careers education and guidance. Pupils develop a realistic awareness of the choices available to them when they leave school. Appropriate work and training-based packages are developed for most pupils. Connexions staff provide additional support for pupils and ensure that those students most at risk receive ongoing support once they have left the school. Staff help pupils to gain places on courses at colleges near to their home. The majority of last year's leavers went on to further education at the end of Year 11.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in just over half of lessons. It is good or better in almost one quarter of lessons. The lack of management time for the headteacher to carry out her management responsibilities prevents her from monitoring and improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning. As a result marked inconsistencies exist in the quality of teaching and

learning in different subjects.

In some lessons, in particular in English, art and woodwork, teaching is good. Stimulating starter activities are introduced as soon as pupils enter the classroom. These engage pupils' interest. Resources are ready for pupils and they are encouraged to settle quickly. As a result, some older pupils in particular concentrate for appropriate lengths of time and make steady progress in these lessons.

However, a significant proportion of teaching lacks structure; learning objectives are unclear and the planning of individual lessons and blocks of lessons is weak. These unsatisfactory lessons are slow to start, teachers' expectations are low and tasks lack challenge. Pupils are not sufficiently engaged in learning, consequently their behaviour deteriorates and they frequently walk out of class. There is only limited use of records of pupils' prior attainment in planning and this impairs the continuity of pupils' learning. In some subjects, for example art, there is a thorough system for regularly assessing pupils' achievement; however, assessment is less thorough in some other subject areas.

Some inconsistencies exist in the way staff manage behaviour; for example, in the correction of inappropriate language and the use of the behaviour modification scheme. Whilst some teachers reinforce their expectations for pupils to use appropriate language, others are too tolerant. In most lessons pupils are not reminded about their targets or encouraged to earn points for acceptable behaviour. A significant number of pupils leave classrooms before lessons end so that no final discussion takes place about what has been learned or about the points they have earned.

Staff know pupils well and in most cases they have caring, friendly relationships with them. They are enthusiastic and encouraging and use humour well to diffuse difficult situations. The option sessions give staff and pupils a good opportunity to develop these positive relationships further.

Pupils and teachers are supported well by most teaching assistants. Assistants are deployed effectively to provide continuity in support for groups as they move between subject teachers. The individual ICT teaching that pupils receive from teaching assistants, both in class and when withdrawn from class, is well planned and pupils make steady progress in these sessions.

Pupils and parents are generally pleased with the quality of teaching. Older pupils in particular value the approachable staff who they say are always there to help when things become difficult.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

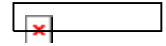
No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *draw-up and implement effectively a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work (paragraph 1 (2));*
- *ensure that the curriculum provides pupils of compulsory school age experience in scientific and physical education (paragraph 1 (2)(a)(ii));*
- *fulfil the requirements of all pupils' statements (paragraph 1 (2)(e))*
- *ensure that the curriculum provides the opportunity for all pupils to learn and make progress (paragraph 1 (2)(i));*
- *ensure that all the teaching is well planned, includes effective teaching methods, suitable activities and wise management of class time (paragraph 1 3(c)); and*
- *shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraph 3(d)).*

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils



Pupils develop self-knowledge through a comprehensive PHSE programme and through the citizenship curriculum. They develop their self-awareness in supportive tutorial sessions. They express their feelings in writing, and older pupils demonstrate empathy and self-confidence, as when discussing characters from Romeo and Juliet.

Staff encourage pupils to reflect on their behaviour and its outcomes, and to distinguish right from wrong. For example, newspaper articles were used well to stimulate a discussion with pupils on school attendance, the law and the consequences when legislation is not followed. In effective lessons there is an emphasis on considering others and making the right choice. However, a significant minority of the pupils who attend regularly are disruptive and at times their behaviour has a detrimental effect on other pupils' concentration and learning.

There are limited opportunities for pupils to show initiative in school, but in food technology lessons, pupils take turns to prepare a complete meal for their class. Pupils plan and shop for and prepare and serve the meal. This provides a good social experience for pupils and develops skills they will require in adult life. It also encourages them to consider the likes and dislikes of others.

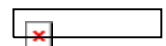
Through the citizenship curriculum, pupils study a range of institutions and their functions and roles. Good use of the community enables pupils to consider the needs of communities and the appropriate behaviour required for participation within it.

An understanding of different cultures is developed satisfactorily through the PSHE and art curricula. Pupils consider race, attitudes, prejudice and race equality, and represent issues arising through their own art work. In some excellent art work pupils explored and created turrets and spires of religious buildings from different cultures.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



The school has written policies on bullying, First Aid, and child protection which comply with the regulations. Staff are familiar with these policies and act quickly when incidents occur. When there are incidents of bullying pupils are clear about the consequences for the bully and the victim.

There is a comprehensive policy for health and safety which is implemented appropriately. However, the policy for outside visits does not address the need for risk assessments to be made for such excursions.

The behaviour policy is focused on rewarding good behaviour. Rules are displayed in all classrooms and pupils are familiar with the scheme for earning merit points. There is no formal documentation which lays out the sanctions to be applied when pupils misbehave; however, sanctions that are applied are recorded appropriately. The admission register and attendance registers are maintained correctly. Staff have clear roles and responsibilities for the supervision of pupils and these are implemented consistently.

Regular maintenance service checks are carried out on the fire alarm systems, fire extinguishers and premises.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

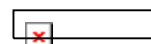
No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *develop procedures for undertaking risk assessments for outside visit in line with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) guidance: 'Health and Safety of Pupils on Outside Visits' (paragraph 3 (2)(c)); and*
- *set out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupil misbehaviour (paragraph 3 (2)(d)).*

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff



The staff form a hard-working and committed team who meet regularly to discuss pupils' needs and their current difficulties. There is one member of staff for every four pupils which is a satisfactory ratio. However, teachers have little non-teaching time, including the headteacher. This means that when pupils with the most difficult behaviour cause disruptions there is often no senior member of staff available to deal with the incident. They have to leave lessons to deal with any difficulties and this interrupts pupils' concentration and disrupts their learning.

Although the school is committed to staff development, opportunities are limited because of the small number of staff and the difficulties the school faces in employing temporary teachers to cover absence.

The procedures for appointing teachers and teaching assistants are clearly defined but written references have not been obtained for all members of staff. The headteacher has received the clearance necessary to work with children in line with the current regulations but at the time of the inspection the proprietor had not been checked with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and clearance for most of the other staff had been applied for but not yet received. The school does not currently hold copies of the required clearance form for staff who have been already been cleared with the CRB.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

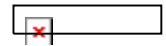
In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *the proprietor is subject to a check with the CRB to confirm his suitability to work with children, that check to be at an enhanced level if his duties involve regularly caring for, training, supervising or being in sole charge of persons aged under 18 (paragraph 4(a));*
- *prior to confirmation of their appointment, members of staff at the school are subject to a check with the CRB which confirms suitability to work with children, that*

check to be at an enhanced level if the member of staff's duties involve regularly caring for, training, supervising or being in sole charge of persons aged under 18 (paragraph 4(b)); and

- *prior to confirmation of their appointment, appropriate checks are carried out on staff to confirm their identity, medical fitness, previous employment history, character references, and where appropriate, qualifications and professional references, and that information is taken into account in determining whether an appointment is confirmed (paragraph 4(c)).*

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The indoor accommodation is of a satisfactory standard. Although regular checks are made of the premises by the proprietor and the teacher with a responsibility for site maintenance, some minor repairs require attention, in particular, the replacement of a cracked window and the ceiling tiles which cover electrical wiring. The premises are clean and in a satisfactory state of decoration. In corridors and some classrooms there are stimulating displays of pupils' art work and written work which brighten the learning environment.

Classrooms are spacious and there is an adequate range of specialist teaching rooms which allow examination courses to be taught. The café and pool room are important areas where pupils meet regularly throughout the school day. At breakfast time and lunch break pupils and staff socialise and eat together and this makes an important contribution to pupils' personal and social development.

Although staff frequently take pupils out to areas of open space in the local community, there is an absence of any outdoor space for pupils to use during breaks. The school's plans to create a hard area adjacent to the building proved to be unsuitable; consequently, pupils tend to go out of the front door on to the pavement. Although their absence is recorded and they are sometimes escorted by staff this is an unsatisfactory arrangement.

The school is aware that it needs to review several issues connected with the safety of the site, including the fitting of window restraints on the café windows which overlook the railway line.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

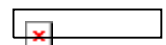
No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

The school meets most of the requirements but in order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should ensure that:

- *the school has adequate security arrangements for the buildings (paragraph 5 (d)); and*
- *there are appropriate arrangements for providing outdoor space for pupils to play safely (paragraph 5 (t)).*

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The school brochure includes most of the required information, including the aims of the school, the admission arrangements and the name and address of the headteacher and proprietor. Particulars regarding the education and welfare of pupils and the school's behaviour policy are also provided but there are no references to the arrangements for discipline and exclusion.

The aim of the initial visit to the school by parents and carers is to establish a partnership between home and school and to discuss the school's expectations, educational provision and policies. On request, parents are given further information on staffing matters, the complaints procedure, and other policies and procedures. However, there is no written information available on the use of sanctions within the school.

Information on pupils' academic achievement and their progress in meeting targets on individual education plans is provided at annual review meetings and in end-of-year reports. Parents and carers, representatives from the funding local education authority (LEA) and any other agencies involved with the pupil are invited to annual review meetings. Outcomes from review meetings, reports and funding and expenditure arrangements are sent to pupils' LEAs.

Admission and attendance registers are maintained in the proper manner.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

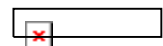
No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *provide to parents of pupils and prospective pupils, and on request to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State, or a body approved under section 163 (1)(b) of the Education Act 2002, particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for discipline and exclusions (paragraph 6 (2)(e)); and*
- *on request, provide to parents of pupils and prospective pupils particulars of the policy and sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupil misbehaviour (paragraph 6 (2)(h)).*

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints



The school has a written policy that clearly sets out the procedures to be followed when handling complaints. It makes a distinction between the informal and formal stages and each stage has appropriate timescales. It is available to parents and pupils on request. However, the policy does not state the minimum number of people necessary to form a hearing panel or stipulate that one member should be independent of the school. It refers to the 'governing body' but there is no such body for this school. The procedures do not allow for parents to attend a panel hearing in all cases. This is left to the discretion of the panel. It is not made clear that parents may, if they wish, be accompanied to a panel hearing or that findings and recommendations are given to all the relevant parties. Records of complaints are carefully monitored and recorded by the school.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

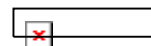
No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to fully comply with Independent School Standards Regulations 2003 the school should revise its existing procedures to ensure that it is clear that:

- *where parents are not satisfied with the response to a written complaint, provision is made for a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor and consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in matters detailed in the complaint (paragraph 7 (f));*
- *where there is a panel hearing a complaint, one person will be independent of the management and running of the school (paragraph 7 (g));*
- *parents can attend a panel hearing and may be accompanied if they wish (paragraph 7 (h)); and*
- *all parties involved in a complaint will receive a copy of any findings and recommendations (paragraph 7 (i)).*

School details



Name of school:	The Education Centre		
DfES ref number:	938/6249		
Type of school:	Special		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	13 - 16		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 33,	Girls 5,	Total 38
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 33,	Girls 5,	Total 38
Annual fees (day pupils):	£15,496		
E-mail address:	educationcentre@btopenworld.com		
Telephone number:	01444 450111		
Fax number:	01444 450666		
Headteacher:	Mrs J Roffe		
Proprietor:	Mr G Wyatt		
Lead Inspector:	Helen Sharpe HMI		
Dates of inspection:	22 - 25 March 2004		

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