

Centre Academy East Anglia

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Heather Yaxley HMI

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Centre Academy East Anglia is a residential special school for a maximum of 50 boys and girls, including 29 places for boarders. It is located in the Suffolk village of Brettenham, between Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds. Alongside the purpose of providing good quality education, the school aims to be a place 'where confidence grows day by day'. The school's registration allows for a maximum of eight pupils between the ages of four and seven years. Currently, there are two within this age range, including one child in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In total, there are 36 students on roll up to the age of 18 years. Students' special educational needs include dyslexia, dyspraxia, Asperger's syndrome, autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Fifteen students have statements of special educational needs and 12 of these are funded by their local authorities. Arrangements for boarding are flexible for up to four nights each week.

Following a visit by Ofsted education and social care inspectors in November 2011, the school's registration was extended, as requested by the proprietor, to provide for students between the ages of four to 17 years. At that time, inspectors found that five regulations for registration were not met and four national minimum standards for residential special schools were not met. These have since been met. The school subsequently asked for approval to offer the American High School Diploma and to extend the age range to 19 years to suit this programme. During this current inspection, the Department for Education gave verbal confirmation that this can take place from September 2012.

The school opened in 1981 as Old Rectory and was previously inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate in 2009. The residential provision was inspected by Ofsted at the same time. These inspections of the school found significant areas of inadequacy. The appointment of an Executive Principal and new head of school in 2010 led to a revised staffing structure, changes to the curriculum, admission of students with a wider range of needs and a change of name. The school is one of two owned by the proprietor.

This is the first inspection by Ofsted since the school changed its name. The residential provision was not inspected as part of this inspection of the school.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

Evaluation of the school

Centre Academy East Anglia provides students with a good standard of education and has improved the provision significantly since the previous inspection. Staff have high expectations for what students will achieve and that they will become independent and confident learners. The welfare, health and safety of students are good and characterised by strong, supportive relationships with staff that particularly support students' emotional well-being. All safeguarding requirements are met, as are those regulations that were not met at the November 2011 visit. Almost all other regulations are met at this time.

Quality of education

The quality of education is good because it gives students access to a curriculum that meets their special educational needs well and teaching that enables students to engage enthusiastically with learning. As a result, students of all ages make good progress from their individual starting points. Those who have missed periods of schooling because of absence or disaffection re-engage successfully with education. Students with dyslexia make good gains in their literacy skills, particularly gaining the strategies and confidence to read aloud and complete extended pieces of writing. Students who lack confidence show good improvement in their self-esteem, as demonstrated by their willingness and enjoyment in performing in front of others. As their confidence increases and their anxieties reduce, students' academic progress accelerates and they achieve closer to age-appropriate norms, including gaining GCSEs that will facilitate entry to further education. Older students have noticed that over the past two years there is a greater focus in lessons on what they are learning and why.

The curriculum is good. It prepares students well for the next stage in their education, including the aspiration for younger pupils to gain GCSEs as they see older students doing and for Key Stage 4 students to aim for higher education. The schemes of work provide an appropriate level of detail so that teachers have the flexibility to tailor work to suit the needs and interests of their students. Some schemes are better than others in providing activities that will develop students' skills and understanding alongside what students will do. Where appropriate, the curriculum is skilfully linked to themes that work well across the age ranges to focus on aspects of learning that are of particular relevance to students' social and emotional development. These include wants and needs, and building healthy relationships. This approach complements the curriculum for personal, social and health education, which is well thought through. A range of well-attended clubs after school and good opportunities from educational trips, further support students' learning and develops their personal skills well. The clubs and arrangements for frequent, planned homework, support the welfare provision for boarders well.

Physical education has a suitably high profile within the timetable. Students take part in planned physical activity each day and this supports their social and emotional needs well, such as being part of a team. A similarly high profile is given to literacy and numeracy, with individual specialist tuition as appropriate.

For younger pupils, an age-appropriate curriculum is provided through an Early Years Foundation Stage approach. This works well to meet a range of complex needs, interests and ages. For the oldest students, this is the first year that they take GCSE examinations. Subjects include English language and literacy, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, history and geography. The curriculum does not yet provide a planned programme for careers education.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall. Although assessment has improved since the previous inspection, it is satisfactory rather than good because there are weaknesses in how assessment is used to target and inform students' progress. Students' individual targets are not always sharp enough to address the most important things to work on. Similarly, teachers' feedback and marking does not always help students to know what it is that helped them achieve and what to improve next. Assessment of the youngest pupils, in Sunshine class, is good. The framework to assess students' work has improved considerably since the previous visit and it now provides an appropriate system to track students' progress.

Resources to support the teaching of science and art have also improved. Students would like the computers to be more efficient but, in general, teaching resources are sufficient and suitable for the curriculum on offer.

Teaching is characterised by teachers' sensitive, yet firm guidance that enables students to make good progress in a supportive climate. Support for students' individual special needs happens without fuss. Teachers allow no excuses for sub-standard work or poor attitudes to learning. Students are encouraged to apply their learning independently and this is effective because teachers provide work at the right level to challenge students to 'have a go'. As a result, students know that they are doing well and generate a belief that they can succeed, albeit as a result of hard work.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development enables pupils to make outstanding progress in their personal skills. This is most clearly demonstrated in their very positive attitudes to work and resilience to persevere when things become difficult. The outstanding behaviour of the majority is exemplified by high levels of support for one another, developing strategies that help manage anxieties and respect for one another's differences and difficulties. Students of all ages talk about the strong friendships that they develop in school. Many find things that they did not know they could excel at, including membership of the band, leading parts in a play, artwork or singing. Students' individual personalities become clearer as they grow in confidence. Cultural development is supported well by the curriculum, enabling students to appreciate difference and diversity, and to play their part within the local community.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The welfare, health and safety of students are good. Senior staff took immediate action to add some safety catches on windows, to remake the ramps, to record fire

drills accurately and to amend the anti-bullying policy, as required as a result of the visit in November 2011. In addition, external lighting has been improved and, in the residential accommodation, changes have been made to the girls' bedrooms and seating for meal times.

All of the required policies are in place and appropriately implemented, with the exception of the requirement to confirm the medical fitness of staff. There is some overlap of information in different policies, such as those for health and safety and first aid. This sometimes makes it difficult to find all of the information in one place. The coordinator for health and safety is currently reorganising the way that routine checks are carried out and subsequent actions recorded. The requirements of the Equality Act (2010) are met.

Arrangement for safeguarding students are thorough and well-thought through so that the particular needs and vulnerabilities of the students are addressed appropriately. This includes a well-coordinated approach between the education and welfare provision for boarders. Students say that they feel safe and secure. They are not all happy with the new rules for when they can use mobile phones, but the arrangements are appropriate and students are abiding by them.

Daily physical exercise, clubs that involve active sports, swimming and schemes of work for personal, social and health education, ensure that students are encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles. Students acknowledge that some changes to meals make it easier for them to make healthy choices but some would like more to be done. Parents and carers believe that their children are helped to have a healthy lifestyle at school.

Students' emotional well-being is well supported and understood by staff. Students speak highly of the support they get from adults. The timeliness of support from staff and their calm approach helps students to rise to the challenges presented to them with confidence.

Concerns raised by one parent during the inspection are being examined by the appropriate bodies.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school carries out all appropriate checks on staff, with the exception of ensuring their medical fitness.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school's accommodation provides suitable space and facilities for teaching. In addition to those in the main building, a series of external classrooms provide separate rooms for science, art, music and information and communication technology, and an Early years Foundation Stage environment. Facilities for teaching science are limited and suitable arrangements are in place with a local school for the use of their facilities for the science curriculum as it is currently offered.

Provision of information

Senior leaders are in the process of revising the information available to parents, carers and others in written form and on their website. Documentation does not yet make clear which information is available.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

A suitable complaints policy and procedure is in place. The school has received no formal complaints over the past year.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the quality of education provided (standards in part 1) and must:

- ensure that there is a curriculum policy set out in writing which is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, and is implemented effectively with regard to careers education (paragraph 2(1))
- provide appropriate careers guidance for pupils receiving secondary education (paragraph 2(2)(g)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors (standards in part 4) and must:

- for all appointments from 1 September 2003, carry out appropriate checks to ensure staff's medical fitness (paragraph 19(2)(b)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- where the proprietor is an individual, provide their full name, address for correspondence during both term time and holidays and a telephone number or numbers on which they may be contacted at all times (paragraph 24(1)(a))
- provide on request particulars of the educational welfare and provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language, arrangements for promoting pupils health and safety on educational visits, academic performance during the preceding academic year, the number of

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made.

complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, the number of staff employed at the school and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 24(1)(b))

- publish on the school's website, or where no such website exists, send a copy of the safeguarding children policy to parents of pupils, and of prospective pupils, on request (24(1)(c)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- improve the quality of students' individual targets and use them more specifically in lessons and teachers' marking
- rationalise policies for welfare, health and safety.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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School details

School status	Independent
Type of school	Residential special school
Date school opened	1981
Age range of pupils	4-19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	Boys: 30 Girls: 6 Total: 36
Number of boarders	Boys: 26 Girls: 3 Total: 29
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 12 Girls: 3 Total: 15
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0 Girls: 0 Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£8,850 (pre-prep), £16,500 (all other classes)
Annual fees (boarders)	£22,500
Address of school	Church Road, Brettenham, Ipswich, Suffolk IP7 7QR
Telephone number	01449 736404
Email address	admin@centreacademy.net
Executive Principal	Dr Duncan Rollo
Head of school	Kim Salthouse
Proprietor	Margaret Murphy

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



31 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Centre Academy East Anglia, Ipswich, IP7 7QR

It was a pleasure to inspect your school and I am writing to let you know what I found out and the judgements that I made. But first, let me thank those of you who gave of your time to talk to me and to fill in the questionnaire. I have taken your comments into consideration when making the judgements and in writing the report. Please pass on my thanks to your families too for their comments.

Your school provides you with a good education and you are well prepared for the future. This is a significant improvement since the previous full inspection. I was pleased to hear from so many of you that you appreciate the support from teachers. Their teaching is good and they know when to give you help and when to challenge you to get on with the work on your own. This builds your confidence and helps you to persevere with the things that you find difficult. Many of you find things that you excel at such as being in the band, painting and drawing, singing and acting. I have asked Dr Rollo and Mrs Salthouse to consider making better use of your individual targets so that work is planned and marked with greater precision.

There are more details in my full report and I hope that some of you will read this with your families. I wish you every success in your future at Centre Academy.

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley
Her Majesty's Inspector