



Office for Standards
in Education

The Centre For Values Education For Life

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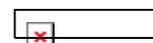
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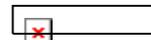
Purpose and scope of the inspection



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

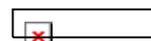


The Centre for Values Education for Life was founded in 1990 as a charity to support disaffected young people in the Birmingham area up to the age of 25. The Centre's school is located in a two-storey building on a restricted site alongside a main road flyover close to Birmingham city centre. The school takes up to 33 boys and girls aged from 14 to 16 years. There were 22 pupils on roll at the time of the inspection.

Many of the pupils have previously attended several schools unsuccessfully and most have experienced permanent exclusion. More than half have been the subject of court orders. All the pupils are funded by Birmingham Local Education Authority (LEA). Most referrals to the school are made by the LEA officers responsible for alternative provision for pupils at Key Stage 4 and for the placement of pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties.

The Centre for Values specialises in working with disaffected young people towards the end of their school careers. There is a strong emphasis on pupils' participation in the running and evolution of the school. The school focuses on nurturing their social and emotional development alongside the teaching of key skills. The school aligns its curriculum to the National Curriculum, but sets out to gain as much value as possible from the process, as well as the content, of pupils' learning. It aims, within the short period of their remaining school careers, to make its pupils ready and willing to engage in further education or in work, and prepared to take their full place in society.

Summary of main findings



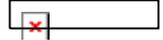
The Centre achieves its principal aim in enabling its pupils, excluded at Key Stage 4 from mainstream schools and with a history of educational failure, to gain accreditation and to move on to further education or to full-time employment. As a result of the work done by the school, the pupils are better prepared for their future. The Centre makes a significant contribution to educational provision in the city. The school is at an early stage of developing the broad and balanced curriculum to which it aspires. It has had an insufficient number of qualified teachers to ensure a consistently high quality of teaching and to offer adequate expertise to extend the curriculum. However, the school has very recently made significant progress in its quest for qualified teachers.

What the school does well:

- it inspires young people who were formerly disillusioned with education to strive hard to achieve accreditation and to seek further education or employment;
- it confronts, challenges and modifies pupils' negative values so that they are better equipped to take a full part in society;
- it encourages all pupils to improve their attendance; most become good attenders;
- pupils' personal development is enhanced through their membership of committees which influence the running of the school;
- this is a 'Safe School,' in line with its aims, in which pupils feel secure and respect each other and the staff and volunteers;
- pupils' behaviour improves to form a sharp contrast with that recorded in earlier schooling;
- the school involves and trains volunteers from the local community who work

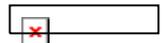
- alongside and support the pupils well; and
- it provides a worthwhile programme of summer-school activities.

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

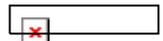


- draw up a written policy setting out the school's approach to the curriculum and devise schemes of work for each subject;
- extend the curriculum in the manner set out in the school development plan so that it becomes broad and balanced, matches pupils' aptitudes and meets the requirements of pupils' statements of special educational need;
- develop a system for the assessment and recording of pupils' performance which will provide a clear picture of progress in each subject and also support teachers' planning;
- improve teachers' subject knowledge;
- continue to develop the quantity and range of resources for teaching and learning;
- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill;
- make appropriate arrangements for providing outside space for pupils to play safely; and
- include additional detail within the information it provides for parents, as detailed in section 6 of this report.

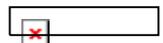
Compliance with the regulations for registration



1. The quality of education provided by the school



The quality of the curriculum



The school aims to focus on the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and personal, social and health education (PSHE), and to complement this work with a broad and balanced curriculum which takes account of the National Curriculum. While the emphasis on key skills and PSHE has been achieved, the limited span of teachers' subject expertise and the lack of specialist teaching facilities has meant that only a narrow range of subjects is taught. Geography, history, design and technology, music, a modern foreign language, and religious education do not feature on the timetable. Only very basic science is taught. Physical education is provided through such activities as extended periods of football coaching at the local leisure centre rather than through a planned and balanced programme of work. As a result, the school is unable to provide pupils with sufficient experience in the areas of scientific, technological, human and social and physical education, and the subject matter of the curriculum is not fully suited to the aptitudes of the pupils.

The school's development plan sets out the intention to extend the curriculum. However, the prospect of progress has only recently materialised through the offer of appointment to an additional qualified teacher and the appointment of a teacher who is in the process of qualifying. The school is

also seeking to appoint a curriculum co-ordinator to lead the required development, and in particular to re-interpret programmes of study and examination courses in a manner which will contribute to the focus on pupils' personal development.

There is no document giving an overview of the school's present or planned curriculum policy. The only subject policy document is for art. There are suitable schemes of work for mathematics, English, careers and PSHE. Other schemes are either too brief to be of real value in guiding planning or do not relate directly to what is being taught.

Six pupils have statements of special educational need. Five of these require that the pupils should have access to the full National Curriculum, and, in this respect, the school's current provision does not meet this requirement.

The school's PSHE programme and its provision for careers guidance, alongside links with the Connexions careers service, ensure that close attention is given to preparing pupils for the responsibilities of adult life. Reflecting the intentions of the Centre for Values Education for Life charity, the PSHE programme includes a strong element of study aimed at enhancing pupils' awareness of their place in society.

The school is registered for pupils aged 14 to 16 years. Two pupils with statements have quite appropriately been permitted to stay a further year in order to complete their examination courses. The required exceptional consents from the Secretary of State have not been sought by the LEA. The school has recently applied to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to increase its age range to 14 to 17 years as extended schooling is likely to be needed by other pupils in future in order to complete examination courses. The quality of the teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching in a third of lessons is good, but it is unsatisfactory in almost one in five.

Only the headteacher and one other teacher are qualified. Four teachers were formerly employed as social mentors and are not qualified. While some of their teaching is good and much is satisfactory, these teachers can not be adequately supported by advice from their two qualified colleagues and are not well informed by detailed schemes of work. As a result of their lack of detailed subject knowledge, they sometimes find difficulty in planning and conducting lessons in a way which fully engages the pupils and in meeting pupils' special educational needs.

The best teaching occurs where teachers are confident in their subject knowledge, and where they communicate their enthusiasm for the subject and their sense of urgency to the pupils. Teachers do not often share the learning objectives for the class or the group with the pupils at the start of the lesson, or to review what has been learned at the end. This would support learning if it were a feature of all lessons.

In the most successful lessons, pupils participate sensibly in any initial discussion and then settle quickly to work. They ask for assistance appropriately in order to solve problems and are eager for the teacher's confirmation that their work is correct. If questions are asked of the class, there is strong competition to provide the answer. Pupils work consistently throughout the whole lesson period and take great care with the presentation of their work. When the work does not catch pupils' interest, they quickly become unsettled and disruptive and readily make negative comments on the quality of teaching; individuals will leave the lesson or opt out, for example by putting their heads down on the table.

The work of teachers is supported by a team of social mentors recruited from the local community and given training by the school. The school can currently call upon the services of 21 mentors who are willing to commit between two hours and several days each week to the role. The mentors provide valuable support to individual pupils in the classroom, and the more experienced of them work with pupils in one-to-one sessions. The voluntary nature of their contribution means that the school cannot plan for the deployment of mentors during the day with any certainty. While some staff use mentors very effectively, and some mentors are pro-active in their classroom role, in a

significant proportion of lessons mentors are under-used.

Despite the efforts of the school, absences, lateness and difficulties with the engagement of pupils in lessons often reduce the effectiveness of teaching and learning. For example in one early morning lesson timetabled for eight pupils, only one of the three pupils present actually undertook any useful work. Further attention to these problems would improve pupils' progress.

The quality of the marking of pupils' work varies. Some work is ticked without comment. The best marking, for example in science, includes step-by-step accounts of how pupils might improve their work.

Resources for teaching and learning are adequate for the current numbers of pupils in English, mathematics, art, PSHE, and careers education. There are sufficient computers, but additional teaching materials for information and communication technology (ICT) would be beneficial. There are insufficient resources for other subjects and to support additional learning needs.

Teachers undertake baseline testing of pupils on admission in English and mathematics, but this is not consistently followed up with further tests which might indicate their rates of progress at intervals during their school career. There is no system to track gains in pupils' skills and knowledge in subjects so as to inform accurate reporting, to enable teachers to check on the success of their teaching and to support their planning. Reports on pupils' work in each subject are issued termly to parents. These contain information on attitudes and likely examination outcomes, but do not refer sufficiently to pupils' attainments and progress in the subject.

Pupils' statements of special educational need are scrutinised prior to their admission and individual schemes are drawn up to indicate how the school will meet the priorities identified in the statement. Individual education plans are prepared for all pupils. A commercial computer program is used effectively to produce these well-prioritised six-monthly plans. They contain a manageable number of objective and measurable targets which are reviewed at the end of each six-month period. More effective systems are needed to track the progress of pupils receiving individual tuition associated with their specific learning difficulties, and to ensure the effectiveness of the methods being used.

Within the range of work undertaken, pupils often make good progress as a result of well targeted teaching which brings about a radical change in their attitudes. The baseline tests on admission often indicate levels of performance in English and mathematics about those expected of eight or nine year old pupils. Progress in English, mathematics and art is particularly good. From within a pupil cohort of the nature described above, 14 out of 17 leavers last year achieved some level of accreditation within the General Certificate of Education (GCSE) system for English, mathematics, ICT, art, or PSHE, many in all the subjects. Results are published in the annual report to governors and parents. When pupils are unable to gain any accreditation, this is generally due to their very late admission to the Centre.

The emphasis on accreditation supports the work of the school as it lends structure to much of the academic work and it also assists teachers in convincing pupils of the value of the units of work which may appear less attractive to individuals within a lesson. For example, in a PSHE lesson two pupils claimed at first that they knew all about the effects of alcohol and were reluctant to take part. They were initially persuaded that this was essential examination course content. They joined in and soon became drawn into the animated discussion during the lesson.

As a result of the good progress made in basic subjects and the changes in pupils' attitudes towards education and society, the great majority of leavers go on to full-time employment or to vocational or academic courses in further education colleges. Given the nature of pupils' difficulties on admission, this represents a very significant achievement.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

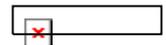
No.

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 (paragraph1(2));
- provide pupils with experience in scientific, technological, human and social and physical education (paragraph1(2)(a));
- provide subject matter appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of pupils, including those pupils with a statement (paragraph 1(2)(b));
- ensure that where a pupil has a statement, the education fulfils its requirements (paragraph1(2)(e));
- ensure that teachers have appropriate knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught (paragraph 1(3)(e));
- provide classroom resources of an adequate quality, quantity and range (paragraph1(3)(f)); and
- put a framework in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching (paragraph1(3)(g)).

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



The school meets all the regulations with regard to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The provision for moral and social development is very good and is stronger than that for spiritual and cultural aspects. The ethos within the school is one of showing concern and respect for the individual. The staff and volunteers work hard to enhance pupils' self-esteem and sense of responsibility to the community as well as giving them the skills and confidence to manage challenging situations in an appropriate way.

The spiritual development of pupils is encouraged incidentally, but there is little specific planning in this respect. The major contributions to pupils' spiritual development are from the school's general ethos and the elements of the PSHE programme which combine to encourage pupils to value themselves and each other and which enable pupils to see that they can make a useful contribution to the community.

The development of pupils' cultural awareness also occurs mainly informally, for example when pupils discuss among themselves the cultural backgrounds from which they come. The school encourages pupils to be tolerant of each others' ethnic background and diversity. There are good opportunities in lessons in citizenship for pupils to develop a knowledge and understanding of public institutions in Britain.

The respect which all members of the community have for each other is evident throughout the school. When the whole school has its weekly meeting, the views of all can be heard. Some of the issues aired in these meetings are sensitive with regard to upsetting the feelings of individuals present, but such is the trust within the group that they are listened to respectfully.

Pupils are helped in their social and moral development by the guidance and support from staff and learning mentors. The PSHE programme focuses on the discussion of moral and social issues. The structured teaching of the subject enables pupils to bring some order to their own thinking. Social development is enhanced through visits to venues within the city and also further afield. 'Outward bound' experiences are organised and annual visits are made to careers workshops at the National Indoor Arena in the city.

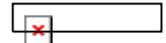
The Centre offers its pupils the opportunity to participate in a worthwhile summer school

programme. This includes activities in school and in the community. The most recent summer school included amongst its activities the production of a highly professional community newsletter featuring the Birmingham carnival.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



There is an extensive range of policies which protect and support pupils' welfare. The intention of the Centre to operate as a 'Safe School' is fully supported by the policies and procedures in place. This results in a good standard of care for pupils, characterised by the openly expressed concern of staff for pupils' general welfare.

When pupils first come to the school they are required to sign a learning agreement which sets out what will be expected of them and what the school promises to provide. This agreement is complemented by a document explaining the standards expected while they are in school. For example, the working of the school's discipline and fairness committee is explained. The committee is comprised of pupils and adults and it offers support to pupils having difficulties with attitudes and behaviour.

Visits made outside the school are safeguarded by appropriate risk assessments. Policies such as those for child protection and first aid support staff in managing any untoward event.

The procedures derived from the behaviour policy are wholly in keeping with the ethos of the school. These provide pupils and staff alike with clear guidelines for the management of behaviour. Pupils' behaviour towards each other and towards adults is generally good, in strong contrast to the picture presented in the great majority of their records from earlier schooling.

The attendance of most pupils is satisfactory, and for some it is very good. For the majority of pupils, this represents a great improvement on earlier attendance patterns. However there are some pupils who continue to have difficulties with attendance despite encouragement and incentives offered by the school and close links with parents.

Each lesson concludes with the award of grades for effort, attitude and behaviour. Pupils take these awards very seriously. There is a degree of negotiation with the individual and with the class group in the award of the grades. This has a strength in that it encourages pupils to reflect on their contribution to the lesson. However, the principle by which class-mates can, in effect, out-vote the view of the teacher can lead on occasion to the award of unsuitably generous grades. Several pupils felt that an improvement in behaviour during the lesson should lead to the award of a high grade for behaviour in the whole lesson. It would be helpful for the school to consider how pupils can be helped to recognise that initial unco-operative behaviour must result in less than a top grade. The review of attitudes at the end of the lesson does not extend to any discussion to check and reinforce what has been learned. This would be a valuable addition to the structure of lessons.

The school has a minority of girls on roll. Their interests are appropriately safeguarded by staff who are sensitive to their social needs. The ethos of the school supports the principle of encouraging self-advocacy, and girls are given equal opportunity to put forward their points of view.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff



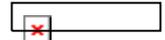
The school has experienced administrative difficulties with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) in obtaining registration in order to undertake the appropriate checks on staff and social mentors. The issue was resolved satisfactorily shortly before the inspection but had the effect of delaying the CRB clearance of a number of staff. During this period the school adhered to guidance from the DfES as to how to deploy adults who had regular contact with children and had not yet received clearance.

The school has well-established practices for the recruitment of teachers and social mentors. Thorough background checks are carried out before any individual takes up a post in the school.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The school is in a two-storey listed building facing a flyover on the city expressway system. The building provides three general-purpose classrooms, an ICT room, an assembly/drama hall, a small library, a dining-room, and offices for the administration of the school and the charity. There are no specialist teaching facilities for science, art, or design and technology. There is a plan drawn up to provide these specialist teaching areas and the school is in the process of finalising the funding for the development. There is no medical room at present, but the planned extension includes this. The extension will also provide a lift for disabled access to the upper floor. Disabled access to the ground floor has already been upgraded during refurbishment.

The rooms are bright, pleasant and maintained in a clean and orderly state. Furnishings and decoration are in good order, although chairs are in short supply in some classrooms. The internal layout of the building is not ideal, with narrow corridors and some awkward access routes between rooms. At the rear of the building, a concreted area provides adequate car parking, but has neither space nor a suitable level surface for outside play. The only local provision for outside recreation is a public park some five minutes' walk away, through a network of pedestrian underpasses. This is not suitable for regular use. Break times are kept to a minimum, and during the short lunchtime pupils are allowed off the premises when they have eaten their meals. While this arrangement has not so far shown any evidence of placing the pupils at risk, it is clearly less secure than pupils' use of a dedicated play area.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

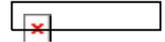
The school meets most of the requirements for registration.

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

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

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill (paragraph 5(l)); and
- make appropriate arrangements to provide outside space for pupils to play safely (paragraph 5(t)).

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The school makes available a wide range of information for parents, placing authorities and other interested parties. The prospectus contains a clear statement of the Centre's ethos and its aim to provide a 'Safe School'. This is supplemented with additional documentation which includes the annual report to the board of governors, the complaints procedure, and a detailed analysis of the school's examination results. Further information is provided to prospective pupils before they enter the school. This details the learning agreement, working practices for students and the system of credits for behaviour and effort in each lesson.

The information provided for parents and carers does not include the school's address, the name of the head teacher, the registered address and telephone number of the body acting as the proprietor or the name and address of the chair of governors. There are no details of the arrangements for admissions, discipline and exclusions. Whilst the school does supply to parents an appropriate complaints procedure, it does not make available an account of any formal complaints registered during the preceding school year.

The school sends parents and carers termly reports on pupils in addition to their annual reports. The placing authority is supplied with weekly attendance records. This is good practice.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

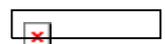
No.

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 include in the information to parents:

- the school's address and the name of the head teacher (paragraph 6(2)(a));
- the address and telephone number of the body acting as the proprietor (paragraph 6(2)(b)(ii));
- the name and address of the chair of governors (paragraph 6(2)(c));
- particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for admissions, discipline and exclusions (paragraph 6(2)(e)); and
- details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j));

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

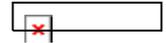


The school has a clearly expressed policy for handling complaints which is shared with parents and placing authorities as one of a number of documents supplied along with the school prospectus. The policy was amended in January 2004 and now fully meets the regulations.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details



Name of school:	The Centre For Values Education for Life		
DfES ref number:	330/6101		
Type of school:	Special School		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	14-16 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 16,	Girls 5,	Total 21
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys 0,	Girls 0,	Total 0
Number of boarders:	Boys 0,	Girls 0,	Total 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Total 6		
Annual fees (day pupils):	£7,500 - £12,500		
Annual fees (boarders):	N/A		
Address of school:	College House Albion Place 51-54 Hockley Hill, Hockley Birmingham B18 5AQ		
E-mail address:	davidrowse@vefl.org.uk		
Telephone number:	0121 523 0222		
Fax number:	0121 523 5111		
Headteacher:	Mr David Rowse		
Proprietor:	Centre for Values Education for Life		
Chair of the governing body:			
Lead Inspector:	Mr R G Dyke HMI		
Dates of inspection:	9-12 February 2004		
