

Assess Education

Bilail House, 260 Picton Road, Wavertree, Liverpool L15 4LP

Inspection dates

13–15 September 2016

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders have not ensured the safety of pupils. The checks and risk assessments to ensure pupils' safety in shared areas lack rigour.
- Leaders have not provided an accurate and sharply focused school self-evaluation or development plan.
- Systems for checking how well pupils are doing in all subjects are underdeveloped. Leaders cannot give details about pupils' progress from their starting points in the school to inform teachers' planning for pupils who are falling behind.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good. In some cases, work does not challenge the most able nor does it engage and sustain the interest of pupils.
- Outcomes for those pupils studying GCSE are highly variable. Some achieve well in mathematics, but in English and science most do not improve well from starting points at the school.
- Attendance remains too low for a significant proportion of pupils. Leaders do not systematically track and analyse the attendance of different groups of pupils so as to target them for improvement.
- Systems to develop, track and monitor the reading skills of those pupils for whom English is an additional language are not well developed.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils generally behave well in lessons and around school. They are polite and treat each other and the staff with respect.
- Personal development is a strength of the school, delivered through personal, social and health education and a broad humanities programme.
- Pupils have a good understanding of modern multicultural British society and accept the different faiths and cultures of their peers.
- Most pupils progress to further education, employment and training because they receive good careers advice.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the proprietor and other leaders improve the safety and welfare of pupils by:
 - as a matter of urgency, reducing the risks to pupils' safety when they access the building and use shared facilities
 - ensuring that all policies and risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated
 - regularly checking that the premises meet the independent school standards
 - ensuring that the admissions register is kept up to date.
- Sharpen self-evaluation and action planning so that leaders can identify necessary improvement in detail and ensure that such improvement is sustained.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - systematically tracking and analysing the progress pupils make across all subjects from their starting points in the school in order to better plan lessons and interventions to secure improvement
 - planning lessons that will challenge and meet the different needs of pupils, including the most able.
- Improve the tracking and analysis of attendance information so that leaders can identify which pupils and groups of pupils to target for improvement intervention.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school: and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 7, 7(a) and 7(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that arrangements to minimise any risks to the pupils are effectively in place (paragraph 16, 16(a) and 16(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently; fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders have not made sure that all the independent school standards are met. Some of the unmet standards concern pupils' welfare, health and safety.
- The headteacher has taken difficult decisions to ensure that all staff concur with her ethos and vision for the school. However, leaders' self-evaluation of the school provision is not sufficiently accurate. This means that improvement planning is not sharply defined to identify in detail where improvements need to be made or to plan effective actions to secure and sustain such improvement.
- Most of the teachers are new to the school this year. The headteacher is providing training and support to develop practice but teaching is not yet good. Schemes of work over-rely on examination content. Lesson plans do not support good teaching to meet the needs of pupils with different abilities.
- A performance management system has been implemented from September. It includes the monitoring of teaching, pupils' work and their progress, and observations of lessons which are planned from next half term.
- The tracking of pupils' progress is underdeveloped. Leaders are unable to provide detailed information about the progress pupils make in all subjects from when they start at the school, particularly in the non-GCSE courses. This affects teachers' ability to plan lessons to meet the needs of pupils and to provide interventions for pupils who are falling behind.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have taken determined action to provide a broader and more engaging curriculum and this now includes a broad humanities course, media studies and a course in information and communication technology. Pupils also have the opportunity to study art and to take an examination in their first language if this is not English.
- Pupils' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding are fostered particularly well. Pupils have a good understanding of British values and modern multicultural society; they demonstrate tolerance of a range of cultures and faiths. For example, in humanities, pupils spoke knowledgeably about the customs of different faiths, and pupils of different nationalities socialise well at break and lunchtime.
- Leaders have developed a calm and purposeful environment with well-established routines where behaviour is good. Staff and pupils demonstrate a high level of respect for each other.
- Parents' surveys, undertaken by the school, show that parents are supportive of the school. The school staff support the headteacher's aims and value the training they have received. Pupils spoken to like being in the school, enjoy most lessons and value the friendships they have formed.
- An annual report for pupils is provided for each subject that pupils study and regular updates are provided for parents throughout the year.
- The school does not own its own outdoor space. Nevertheless, school leaders have put into place appropriate risk assessments to enable the local park area to be used as an outdoor social area.

Governance

- The school does not have a governing body. The proprietor leads and governs the school. She has some external challenge from the deputy headteacher of an academy in Ellesmere Port but no formal appraisal.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective because leaders have failed to ensure the safety of pupils. The headteacher has started to take action to address this.
- Leaders are aware of the requirements of the independent school standards. However, a number of adjustments to policies, risk assessments and other documents had to be completed during the inspection. Likewise, improvements to the premises were made during the inspection.
- Staff receive induction and training that covers safeguarding, child protection and health and safety. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe and they understand internet and social media safety, sexual exploitation and radicalisation. Procedures for recording and reporting safeguarding incidents are robust. The school works well with parents and a wide range of partners in order to ensure that pupils are cared for well.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning is not consistently strong.
- In some lessons, teachers' good subject knowledge, effective planning and high expectations lead to strong pupil motivation and interest. However, planning to meet a range of pupils' needs is not evident in schemes of work nor is its impact evident during lessons.
- For some pupils in the GCSE group and in the second language group, the work is too low level and teaching does not always explain effectively what is expected from pupils. This leads to a loss of interest by some pupils. Some teaching does not sustain the interest of those most able pupils who spend too long waiting for their classmates to catch up with them during lessons.
- Planning for teaching is not supported by a systematic tracking of pupils' progress that highlights how well they are doing. This means that teachers are not clear about which pupils need support to catch up or which pupils need more challenge.
- There was no work to be seen from previous years and limited work in pupils' new books. In those books seen, pupils' work was completed appropriately and showed pupils making progress and acquiring skills. Where books had been marked, teachers had adhered to the school's policy.
- New teachers are being supported, mentored and provided with training to develop teaching and planning skills. A new performance management system sets out clearly how teaching, assessment and marking will be monitored. It is too early yet to identify any impact from this work.
- There are positive relationships between pupils and their teachers. Consequently, pupils behave well even when teaching fails to fully maintain their interest.
- Pupils enjoy and contribute well to discussion in humanities lessons. They show a good understanding of a range of cultures and faiths and are keen to learn about democracy and human rights.
- The school has rightly focused on the importance of reading. A new literacy coordinator has been appointed to improve the teaching, tracking and monitoring of reading skills. A few pupils for whom English is an additional language read to the inspector. They are learning to decode words and understand what they read, but it is clear that there is not a systematic approach to teaching reading in the school. The literacy coordinator is exploring the most appropriate programme to adopt.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate. Systems to ensure that pupils are safe are weak. Pupils are not adequately supervised and risk assessments are not effective when pupils use shared areas and facilities in the building. The proprietor is aware of the urgency of resolving these issues.
- Some key policies and risk assessments were in need of updating. Leaders completed this before the close of the inspection. The school has applied for a filter for the internet system.
- The personal development of pupils is good. It is taught through personal, social and health education lessons where pupils learn to manage conflicts, to develop safe friendships and relationships and to understand those skills and qualities needed to be successful. They learn how to keep themselves safe on the internet and on social media.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is well developed. In broad humanities lessons, they learn about different faiths and cultures, about British values, justice and democracy and about modern, multicultural British society and how it has changed. This education is supported by a range of trips and visits, including a visit to a mosque, a synagogue and the law courts. In lessons on human rights, pupils demonstrate a good understanding of different cultures and faiths and this is also evident in the tolerance and respect they show each other and the school staff.
- Pupils are generally well prepared to move to the next stage of their education, training or employment and receive a weekly session from the careers advisory team, Career Connect. They meet advisers from the three local further education colleges as well as receiving advice and support from school staff. As a result, almost all pupils progress to a suitable education or work placement when they leave.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Attendance at the school remains low for most of the pupils. The attendance of pupils with English as an additional language was over 90% in the 2015/16 school year. However, this had dropped to 76% at the time of the inspection.
- Although the attendance of some pupils in the GCSE and the assessment groups has improved since they joined the school, overall attendance in 2015 was significantly below the national average for mainstream schools and special schools for pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. Parents receive a telephone call each day if pupils are absent, and the local authority education welfare officer supports the school to reduce persistent absence. Despite these actions, tracking of the attendance of groups of pupils, boys, girls and children looked after is not sufficiently systematic to provide leaders with detailed information to target improvements.
- Pupils behave well in school and in lessons. They show respect for staff and each other and are polite and friendly towards visitors. They generally respond well to instructions.
- Pupils feel safe in school and say that instances of bullying are rare.
- At breaks and lunchtimes, pupils are well supervised by staff so that behaviour out of lessons is orderly.
- Attitudes to learning are good in most lessons but, where teaching fails to meet pupils' needs or successfully engage them, some pupils lose interest and become distracted.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Overall, the systematic tracking of pupils' progress from their starting points in the school is not sufficiently well developed to enable leaders to provide a clear analysis of how pupils are doing in each subject or how much progress pupils make over their time in the school. A new assessment system is to be implemented this year for all groups of pupils.
- Pupils enter the school with limited information about how well they have achieved in the past. Very few have any key stage 2 information. Some pupils are new international arrivals and have no information about what they have already learned. The school assesses all pupils on entry to the school in reading, spelling age and mathematics, which forms the basis from which the school plots pupils' progress. However, subsequent tracking is not systematic and does not support teachers to plan lessons and interventions to ensure that pupils can achieve their full potential.
- Pupils with English as an additional language attend regularly and make good progress in learning to speak and read English and in mathematics. Some go on to take GCSE examinations. However, the school did not present evidence of progress in reading or in functional skills for past pupils, so it was unclear how the school had supported them.
- As well as on-entry tests for all pupils, the skills of pupils in the school's assessment group are tested on entry in mathematics, reading, spelling and comprehension. This provides a mathematics and English level or grade of attainment. Personal development and behaviour are also targets for improvement. As some pupils stay for only six to eight weeks, leaders could provide only limited and incomplete information of improvement in reading, spelling and academic progress because evidence of smaller steps in academic improvement and personal development had not been tracked.
- Some pupils who are referred to the school by the Liverpool Alternative Provision Team to study for GCSE examinations make good progress, particularly in mathematics. Over time, GCSE examination outcomes are improving. The 2016 unvalidated results suggest that there will be further improvement in mathematics. In 2016, the school's examination information suggests that more than three quarters of the 15 pupils made at least one grade of progress from their starting point in mathematics, but fewer than half made any progress in English. Science results have declined since 2014.

School details

Unique reference number	138878
DfE registration number	341/6003
Inspection number	10020909

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

Type of school	Other – Independent school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	14 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	32
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Dena Robinson
Chair	N/A
Headteacher	Dena Robinson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£9,165
Telephone number	0151 735 0036
Website	www.assessededucation.co.uk
Email address	Denarobinson1327@hotmail.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–10 October 2013

Information about this school

- Assess Education is a mixed, independent day school working as alternative provision for education in association with the local authority. It was registered as a school in October 2012 for up to 32 pupils aged 14 to 16. There are currently 32 pupils on roll and one of these is over the age of 16. They are taught in three groups: a GCSE group for pupils acquiring an alternative academic education; a group of students for whom English is an additional language, aged 14 to 16; an assessment group for 14- to 16-year-olds who are placed by the local authority to have their longer-term needs assessed. Pupils in this latter group usually stay for a six-week period or until another placement has been found for them.
- The school continues to operate as a short-term assessment centre, and other pupils are placed here by the local authority, which is the main user of the school, either

because their school placement has broken down or because they are new arrivals to the country and in Year 11.

- The school sometimes accepts pupils from different local authorities where they are being placed out of their area. The school can cater for pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan for emotional, social and behavioural needs but there are none on roll currently. However, pupils often come to the school having missed periods of education and with previously poor attendance.
- A few pupils are currently in the care of the local authority.
- The school uses an alternative provision for physical education, which takes place at a local sports centre.
- The school did not provide a breakdown of the proportion of current pupils who are disadvantaged. The school receives additional funding, the pupil premium, for a small number of children looked after.
- The pupils come from a wide range of ethnicities.
- The headteacher is the proprietor of the school.
- The school is registered for 32 pupils aged 14 to 16, but the proprietor would like to accept admissions over this number and currently there is at least one post-16 pupil attending the school who the headteacher says is not on roll. The proprietor had not formally notified the Department for Education of the growth of the school and no material changes to its registration have been approved. However, during the inspection, the headteacher agreed that this notification is to be made soon.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors made two tours of the premises, the first accompanied by the headteacher.
- Inspectors observed teaching in a range of lessons.
- The behaviour of pupils was observed throughout the day including at breaks and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors held discussions with the proprietor who is also the headteacher, the designated lead for safeguarding and pastoral care, the teacher responsible for performance management, the teacher responsible for literacy, a group of teachers and three groups of pupils. Inspectors also held informal talks with pupils throughout the school day.
- The lead inspector had a discussion with the local authority lead officer and the service commissioner from Liverpool Children Services, Alternative Provision Team.
- School policies, risk assessments and other documents were examined to check compliance with the independent school standards and to provide other inspection evidence. Records including those related to admissions, attendance and behaviour were also reviewed.
- Inspectors examined pupils' work in lessons and in a separate scrutiny of written work. They listened to several pupils read.
- There were no responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. Inspectors considered parent surveys undertaken by the school during the previous school year. Questionnaires were returned by six members of staff.

Inspection team

Gena Merrett, lead inspector

John Nixon

Her Majesty's Inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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