

Centre Academy

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	212/6408
Unique Reference Number	101175
Inspection number	329568
Inspection dates	20 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Karin Heap

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
T 08456 404040

www.ofsted.gov.uk



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, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding students and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Centre Academy in London is an independent, mixed international school, registered for students aged 7 to 18 years. Currently there are 54 students on roll representing a total of 12 different countries. Over half of the students have statements of special educational need, which include specific learning difficulties, dyspraxia and dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and autistic spectrum disorders. The school caters for a wide range of abilities. Students who have statements are placed by local authorities and the remaining students are privately funded. There are four students who have English as their second language. No students are looked after.

The school aims to provide a supportive and nurturing learning environment to enable every individual to achieve his or her full personal, social and academic potential. The school offers a curriculum based on the English National Curriculum as well as the American High School Diploma. It is divided into three departments: the lower school for students under 11, the middle school for those aged 11 to 14 and the upper school for those aged 14 to 18 years.

The school's mission is to teach students the skills necessary to enable them to succeed, within both the academic and vocational contexts, so that they begin to discover and develop their own talents and strengths. Centre Academy was last inspected in February 2005.

Evaluation of the school

Centre Academy offers a good quality of education overall. The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and their behaviour is outstanding. The school provides good teaching by a team of skilled and well trained staff. As a result students have good attitudes to learning and they make good progress. Relationships between students and their teachers are very close, based on mutual respect and very effective support. This creates a good learning environment which supports their achievements in lessons. The school has developed well since the last inspection and now meets nearly all of the regulations. Specific building issues have all been addressed and the school uses local facilities to

compensate for its restricted play area. The school now has a clear anti-bullying policy and appropriate fire safety systems. Students and the vast majority of their parents rightly express a high level of satisfaction with the school.

Quality of education

Centre Academy provides a good quality of education. The learning environment is bright, colourful and stimulating and the school is creative and flexible in using its often very small space to the best effect to overcome restrictions of the building. There are plans in place to improve and extend learning facilities for September 2009 with a new three-story building.

The curriculum is good. The Academy is the only school in the country which provides a curriculum based on the National Curriculum, the American High School Diploma and vocational life skills. A good range of subjects is taught and newly implemented enrichment activities complement the curriculum. The upper school offers up to twelve GCSE courses. Recently established clubs such as yoga, photography, gardening, music, dance, running and sports mentoring enhance the curriculum and encourage healthy living and awareness of the school's diversity. The school offers a good range of specialist teaching to meet individual needs; this includes speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and counselling. The curriculum plans cover all key subjects taught in school but their quality is variable. Not all subject documentation provides for the changing needs of learners or includes guidance to enable accurate assessment. The school is aware that the curriculum documentation is inconsistent and has recently appointed two heads of key stages to use existing good practice to improve it.

The quality of teaching is consistently good with outstanding elements. Lessons have clear objectives, focused on students' learning. Resources are well matched to meet the range of students' needs and the pace of lessons allows students to remain focused and interested. Students say that lessons are fun; they make good academic progress and good and often outstanding progress in their personal development. This is because teachers know them exceptionally well and provide good academic, social and emotional guidance through an effective mentoring system. Clear admission procedures ensure that students are accurately placed. This includes a three- to five-day induction trial, a baseline assessment on entry and a mentor for every student. The school has recently introduced detailed learning style assessments to aid students' learning. These are reflected in their individual education plans and shared between all staff. Regular half term and end of year reports generally confirm students' good progress both academically and in personal and social development on an annual basis. However, the school has not yet collated consistent progress data which can be monitored over a longer period of time to show the good progress of students, to better identify underperformance and to inform teachers' planning. The upper school uses data to predict grades and monitor students' progress. For students age 7-13 however, regular assessments to National Curriculum levels have only just been implemented. Systematic reporting ensures that parents and other professionals, including local authorities, are well informed and involved in the decision making of students' future

learning. When students leave the Academy, all successfully move on to further education. To date all students who have completed the American High School Diploma have entered a university course of their choice.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students clearly enjoy coming to school and they learn in a safe environment. This is reflected in their good attendance and positive attitude to learning. The school has appropriate and developing links with the local community. For example the local constabulary is involved to develop students' safety awareness and students access a range of work experience programmes in the local and wider community. Strong partnerships with other professionals ensure that students are well supported and encouraged to attend school and complete their homework. Students celebrate their achievements in assemblies and on 'Prize Day'. They learn about other cultures and celebrations and support good causes through fundraising events. Students know right from wrong and follow a strong moral code. In religious studies, for example, they learn to reflect on behaviours and different viewpoints. Younger students follow a social skills programme which is supported by the speech and language therapist. The school celebrates cultural diversity through a range of activities such as a 'Science Fair', the 'Art Fair' and the photography club, which focuses on the specific diversity of students in the school. Students and staff represent a total of 12 countries and 24 different languages. Students are encouraged to lead a healthy life style and they have access to two hours of physical education, including swimming, as well as additional sport clubs.

Taking into consideration the complex additional needs of students, their behaviour in and around school is outstanding. Every opportunity is taken by the school to help them adopt good and very considerate patterns of behaviour. Students are courteous and polite and seek help from teachers when they need it. The school applies very effective support structures which help students in their personal organisation and staff continually insist on a high level of discipline and good conduct. Mentors know students exceptionally well; they support students at the beginning and end of the day and provide very effective advice and guidance to students as well as teachers.

Safeguarding students' welfare, health and safety

The provision to ensure the welfare, health and safety of students is good. The school has a friendly, family-orientated atmosphere which greatly supports students' feelings of well being and promotes their personal and social development. Teachers supervise students very well around the school and procedures for outside visits include appropriate risk assessments. Appropriate child protection procedures are in place and the staff deal firmly with rare incidents of misbehaviour. However, the school does not meet all the requirements for making checks on the suitability of proprietors. Arrangements for health and safety, fire safety, risk assessments and first aid meet requirements. These arrangements are reviewed regularly. Students report that bullying is rare and that any incidents that do occur are dealt with swiftly.

This contributes to their high levels of confidence and their trusting relationships with all adults in the school.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must ensure that:

- the proprietor of the school, or where appropriate the chairperson of the proprietorial body, has been subject to an enhanced check by the Secretary of State confirming his/her identity, right to work in the UK, enhanced CRB check, or where appropriate confirmation that he/she does not contravene section 142 of the 2002 Act(a) (paragraph 4B)
- the chairperson checks the other members of the proprietorial body to confirm their identity, right to work in the UK, enhanced CRB check, or where appropriate confirmation that he/she does not contravene section 142 of the 2002 Act(a) (paragraph 4B(4 and 5))
- in relation to each member of a body of persons named as the proprietor in post on or after 1 August 2007, the register shows whether a check was made of: his/her identity; right to work in the United Kingdom; and whether an enhanced CRB check was carried out and certificate obtained, or where appropriate, confirmation that he/she is not barred from working in school under section 142 of the Education Act 2002. The register must also show the date on which any check was completed or certificate obtained (paragraph 4C(6 and 7)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- further develop curriculum planning to ensure consistent and effective teaching to meet the changing learning needs of students
- further develop assessment procedures so that long-term academic and personal/social progress can be monitored effectively.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

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 students		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of students' needs		✓		
How well students make progress in their learning		✓		

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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

Welfare, health and safety of students

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

Name of school	Centre Academy		
DCSF number	212/6408		
Unique reference number	101175		
Type of school	Junior and secondary school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1974		
Age range of students	7-18 years		
Gender of students	Mixed		
Number on roll	Boys: 39	Girls: 15	Total: 54
Number of students with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 26	Girls: 8	Total: 34
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees	£24,375 - £32,325		
Address of school	92 St John's Hill London SW11 1SH		
Telephone number	020 7738 2344		
Fax number	020 7738 9862		
Email address	info@centreacademy.net		
Headteacher	Dr D Rollo		
Proprietor	Centre Academy Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Karin Heap		
Dates of inspection	20 November 2008		