

Focus 1st Academy

339 Bowes Road, New Southgate, London N11 1BA

Inspection dates

12–14 September 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have improved the overall effectiveness of education at this alternative provision for highly disaffected pupils. All aspects of its work are now good.
- The proprietor and all members of staff are fully committed to helping pupils modify their behaviours, take responsibility for their actions and engage positively in their learning. They make sure that pupils are safe and they pay considerable attention to pupils' well-being. Pupils respond positively because they know that all members of staff care about them. This builds pupils' self-esteem and raises their ambitions to succeed in their future careers.
- Pupils join the school with extremely low academic standards for their age. Teaching is good because teachers plan lessons to meet the needs of each pupil. Teachers frequently check on pupils' progress and help them improve their work.
- Because of the strong pastoral support and good teaching, pupils develop positive attitudes and make good progress in their learning. They leave the school ready for further education, employment or training.
- The curriculum is well suited to pupils' academic needs, career ambitions and personal development. It is less effective, however, in providing for pupils' scientific education.
- There are limited opportunities for pupils to take part in enrichment activities to broaden their cultural experiences and none to contribute to the wider community.
- Pupils generally attend this alternative provision more regularly than they did in their previous schools.
- Most pupils do not arrive punctually at the start of the day and to lessons after breaks. This means that lessons tend to start late so valuable learning time is lost. Consequently, although pupils make good progress overall, they miss reaching the higher standards of which they are capable.
- The proprietor and leaders have ensured that the school is compliant with all the independent school standards.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - developing the formal curriculum by increasing the opportunities for scientific education
 - increasing enrichment activities in order to broaden pupils' cultural development
 - creating opportunities and encouraging pupils to contribute to the wider community.
- Raise outcomes further by improving pupils' punctuality to school and to lessons after breaks.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have created an environment where all members of staff work together to make pupils feel valued and respected. They work with great patience and dedication to support pupils' complex pastoral and academic needs. As a result, pupils, all of whom arrive disaffected, re-engage in education and improve their life chances. They develop the required skills to continue to further education, training or employment.
- The headteacher visits lessons every day and gives ongoing feedback to teachers on how to improve the quality of their teaching. During their daily meetings, teachers discuss their lessons and each pupil's progress. This creates an open culture where teachers share best practice and continuously check on every pupil's progress. Teachers use the information well to adapt their teaching to close identified gaps in pupils' learning. As a result, teaching is good and improving and enables pupils to make good progress.
- Leaders have established strong links with the five north London local authorities whose schools refer pupils to this alternative provision. Working together with local authority officers, leaders welcome disaffected and often permanently excluded pupils to have a new beginning in this school. Pupils and parents told the inspector that this school helps them to turn their lives around and prepare for a successful future. Parents also highlighted the positive impact that the school has on improving their children's behaviour and attitudes at home.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have expanded the curriculum offer. They introduced GCSE courses in citizenship, which is compulsory for all pupils, as well as in English and mathematics for the most able pupils. All other pupils continue to study functional skills in English and mathematics. In addition, pupils study vocational courses in information and communication technology (ICT) and in preparing for working life. The curriculum includes non-accredited courses in music technology and sports. The curriculum prepares pupils well for continuing into further education courses and apprenticeships.
- The sports course incorporates theory lessons that include aspects of biology, such as the study of the digestive system. However, the teaching of other aspects of science is not as well-developed.
- Pupils learn about fundamental British values and all the protected characteristics, as defined in the Equality Act 2010, as part of the citizenship and preparing for life courses. Teachers actively encourage pupils to debate a range of issues, including on equalities and forms of discrimination. Visitors to the school enhance pupils' understanding of current events and life in modern Britain. The talk given by the mother of a boy who was stabbed to death resonated with pupils. She got them to think about the dangers of carrying knives and the devastating impact their use can have on people's lives. A local MP, who has a background in criminal law, shared case studies with pupils. This helped them to understand the rule of law in the UK and understand how the justice system works.
- Opportunities for pupils to take part in enrichment activities to broaden their cultural experiences are limited to the occasional educational outing. Last year, for instance, their only visit was to the Houses of Parliament. Pupils do not have opportunities to contribute

to the wider community.

Governance

- The headteacher is the sole proprietor and there is no governing body. The proprietor is therefore responsible for all aspects of the school's work.
- The proprietor has ensured that the school meets the independent school standards and other requirements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All members of staff are fully aware of the wide range of safeguarding issues to which pupils may be susceptible. Through regular training, they are knowledgeable about how to identify any worrying signs. They are vigilant. During the daily end of school meetings, members of staff share any concerns and report any changes to pupils' behaviours. This means that the deputy headteacher, who is the designated safeguarding leader, can take prompt action.
- The designated safeguarding leader works in close liaison with the local safeguarding children boards of the placing local authorities, as well as with other agencies and parents to ensure pupils' safety and well-being.
- The school publishes its safeguarding policy on its website. The policy has proper regard to current government requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers assess pupils' abilities in English and mathematics when they join the school. They use this information to plan learning to meet the needs of each pupil.
- There are two teachers in each class, and classes are small. This means that a key strength in all teaching is the strong personal support pupils get. Teachers encourage pupils to learn and they help them gain new knowledge, understanding and skills. Consequently, pupils become successful learners and make good progress.
- Teachers establish a strong rapport with the pupils. Pupils say they feel that the teachers care for them and that the teachers want them to succeed. Pupils, who in the past did not engage positively in learning, respond in kind and work hard.
- Teachers set work that is more challenging for the most able pupils. This enables the most able pupils to take GCSE examinations in English and/or mathematics, rather than the functional skills tests in those subjects.
- Teaching makes a notable contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of fundamental British values. For instance, the inspector saw pupils researching the homeless figures in the UK and comparing them to other countries in Europe. They discussed what might account for the differences. Other pupils were finding information and discussing a person's rights when placed under arrest by the British police.
- Teaching is effective in helping pupils make consistently good progress. It is not outstanding as too much teaching and learning time is lost because of pupils' late arrival

to school and lessons. This slows their progress and acts as a barrier to them reaching the higher standards of which they are capable.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils who join this alternative provision generally enter with low self-esteem. This is because they were disengaged in their previous schools and so they learned too little. Owing to the nurturing environment in this school, pupils progress well and become successful learners. They gain confidence in their abilities and articulate sound aspirations to pursue successful careers.
- Pupils say that the school is a safe environment and that there is no bullying. Pupils speak very highly of their confidence in talking to members of staff about any concerns, including from home or out of school. They know that all members of staff will listen attentively and help them.
- Pupils learn to stay safe, for example, by talks given by the police, ambulance service and fire brigade. As part of the curriculum, they learn about e-safety, which reinforces the message of how to use social media responsibly and legally.
- Leaders support pupils' physical, mental and emotional well-being through providing weekly sporting activities, teaching about healthy eating and offering one-to-one mentoring with an external counsellor.
- A designated member of staff provides good-quality impartial information and guidance to help pupils gain access to further education, apprenticeships or employment. This helps pupils to plan for successful careers once they leave the school.
- Pupils have few opportunities for extra-curricular enrichment activities and for contributing to the wider community. This limits pupils' cultural and social development.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders make clear their expectations for good behaviour. There are well-defined sanctions and rewards. Adults readily discuss with pupils strategies to modify their behaviours. As a result, pupils' behaviour markedly improves as they settle into the school. They develop positive attitudes to learning and cooperate well with their teachers. Lessons proceed with little disruption. Pupils, therefore, become successful learners.
- Many pupils significantly increase their rates of attendance compared to their previous schools.
- In the morning, a number of pupils arrive late. This delays the start of the first lesson. Leaders grant pupils the privilege of going out of the building at break and lunchtimes. Too often, pupils return late so lessons do not restart on time. This lack of punctuality means that valuable learning time is lost. This slows pupils' progress and is detrimental to them reaching the higher standards of which they are capable.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils join this alternative provision with very low starting points. They make good progress, including in English and mathematics, during their time at the school because of the high-quality teaching and pastoral care.
- Pupils gain qualifications in functional skills in English and mathematics, GCSE citizenship, and vocational accreditation in ICT and preparing for work.
- The most able pupils achieve GCSE qualifications in English and/or mathematics because teachers identify their potential early on and set them work that is more challenging.
- Owing to their success in achieving basic qualifications, the vast majority of pupils proceed to further education, apprenticeships or employment. Recent graduates, for instance, are studying vehicle maintenance, art and design, hospitality and music at further education colleges. Others are on apprenticeships in the construction industry and in nurseries, for example.
- Because of the vast improvements in their behaviours, attitudes and academic achievements, pupils leave this alternative provision effectively ready for life in modern Britain as successful and responsible citizens.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 141247 |
| DfE registration number | 308/6003 |
| Inspection number | 10035814 |

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.

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| Type of school | Alternative provision |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 14 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 11 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | Marina Savva |
| Headteacher | Marina Savva |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £9,000 |
| Telephone number | 020 8361 5658 |
| Website | www.focus1stacademy.org.uk |
| Email address | marina@focustraining.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 9–11 June 2015 |

Information about this school

- Focus 1st Academy was set up in 2000 to provide education and training. It was awarded independent school status in August 2014 and this is the second standard inspection, the first being in June 2015.
- This alternative provision is located in Arnos Grove in the London borough of Enfield and is registered to educate up to 25 pupils.
- The school caters for disaffected young people with a history of disrupted schooling, including those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The pupils who attend the school have all been referred by five different north London local authorities. Many pupils join at various points during the academic year. All of these pupils remain on roll at their secondary schools.

- The school's aim is 'to empower students to become effective learners and experience success'.
- There are no pupils who have education, health and care plans.
- The school does not use any other alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- Learning was observed in seven lessons; most were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Samples of pupils' work were scrutinised. The school's information about pupils' progress was also checked.
- The inspector spoke to the headteacher, leaders and teachers. There was also a formal discussion with three current and two former pupils and various informal discussions with pupils during breaktimes and in lessons. The inspector spoke on the phone to the local authority's leader for alternative provision.
- The inspector took account of the five responses to the questionnaire for staff. He could not take account of the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents (Parent View), as there were no responses. He did, however, speak with two parents and consider an email from another.
- The inspector considered documentation, policies and all aspects of the school's work to check compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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