

Focus 1st Academy

339 Bowes Road, New Southgate, London N11 1BA

Inspection dates

11 July 2019

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet the independent school standards relevant to the material change if the material changes relating to the school provision are implemented.

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(1)–2(2)(b), 2(2)(d)–2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(f), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i)

- The school's curriculum policy provides an adequate overview of the school's curriculum aims, including for the admission of pupils in key stages 1, 2 and 3. Leaders have planned a well-structured and sequenced curriculum covering all of the required areas of learning. It is based on the national curriculum, with a strong focus on promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- There are appropriate long-term and medium-term plans for each of the proposed year groups. These set out in detail what pupils will learn and the skills they will develop in each subject across each half term. They show appropriate progression over time in line with age-appropriate national expectations for what pupils should know. Key themes for each half term link teaching across the different subjects. To further build pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills a wide range of enrichment opportunities are also clearly defined.
- Leaders are giving the teaching of reading high priority. For pupils in Years 1 and 2 this will be a structured and regularly taught phonics programme. For older pupils whose reading is below expectations, provision will be made for them to catch up so they are more able to access the curriculum.
- British values are actively promoted across all aspects of school life. For current pupils, workshops provide them additional opportunities to develop their understanding of these and how they apply to their own lives. Leaders intend to extend these to the proposed younger age range. Detailed schemes of work, in line with the school's ethos, are in place for pupils' personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Pupils will further learn about other faiths and cultures that fully reflect the diversity of modern Britain through religious education.

Paragraph 2(2)(e)–2(2)(e)(iii)

- The school's current pupils aged 14 to 16 are provided with a wide range of impartial careers guidance. This includes opportunities to discuss their interests and aspirations.

Work experience and visiting speakers further enable pupils to learn about the world of work. As a result, by the end of key stage 4 pupils can make decisions about their futures. Teachers assist pupils with their choices, helping them to secure places in further education or employment. Leaders intend to extend this provision for the proposed key stage 3 pupils. So, regardless of their time in school, their aspirations are raised and they are better prepared for their lives beyond the school.

Paragraph 3, 3(a)–3(j), 4

- To ensure that the school will be adequately prepared to teach primary-aged pupils, leaders have employed a teacher with experience of teaching in this age range. She intends to bring her current knowledge and experience of teaching phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) to the new provision.
- Lesson plans are closely linked to the well-structured curriculum. This ensures that pupils acquire new knowledge and make good progress towards the half-termly learning goals set out for each subject.
- The primary and secondary phase curriculum leaders have identified an appropriate range of suitable resources to support the academic and personal development of the new age range. This includes reading books, toys, props for role play and materials for art. It is planned that every classroom used by primary-aged pupils will have a reading corner and an area for role play to help pupils develop their imaginations and express their feelings.
- In line with current practice, the leaders intend to continue to use a referral form to collect detailed information about each pupil from their placing school. This includes details of their behavioural difficulties, learning support needs and academic attainment. This is then used to place the pupil in a class best suited to their needs and current academic development, together with personalised and appropriate support.
- A well-established assessment system is in place, based on the qualification which pupils are studying for. This will be extended to monitor and assess pupils' knowledge against the expectations of the different national curriculum subjects they will be following. Leaders intend to work closely with the placing schools to ensure that teachers have a clear view of pupils' starting points and provide a detailed record of learning for their return.
- The school is likely to meet the standards in this part if the material change is implemented.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Paragraph 5

- School leaders have integrated pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development into the schemes of work. This includes teaching in religious education and PSHE. The half-termly plans for Years 1 to 9 also detail special events and visits. These are well considered, linked to curriculum teaching and designed to further pupils' knowledge and understanding of the half-termly topics. These will be developed, for example, through a visit to a mosque or to Cambridge University to see the telescopes. Others

intend to help pupils learn about British culture and institutions, such as visits to the British Museum, Houses of Parliament and Alexandra Palace.

- As in the current provision, regular workshops and visiting speakers will be age-appropriately extended to younger pupils. For example, 'Bikestormz' will help pupils foster a love of safe bicycle riding and speakers will aim to inspire and encourage pupils to make positive choices. In addition, a focus on performing arts will help pupils build self-confidence and self-esteem. All designed to motivate, raise aspirations and improve attitudes, and so re-engage pupils with their education.
- At the heart of the school's work is helping pupils to understand their difficulties, improve their behaviour and be successful learners so that they can move to the next stage of their education. Leaders are aware that they will need to adapt their current approaches to meet the needs of younger pupils. For example, including role play areas in classrooms and space for pupils to play as they reflect and talk.
- Current pupils are tolerant of each other and get on well. Leaders intend to foster the same supportive and respectful environment in the extended provision, so pupils develop strong social skills and learn respect for others. This includes the recently introduced 'building bridges' football league. This provides pupils with opportunities to develop their social skills and develop respect for their peers from other schools and adults through football matches.
- The school behaviour system sets out clearly the school expectations, sanctions and rewards and has successfully helped current pupils develop their moral understanding. Leaders plan to apply this (age appropriately) to the younger pupils so they, too, can learn what is right and wrong and improve their behaviour.
- This standard is likely to be met if the material change is implemented.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7

- The school has a detailed safeguarding policy which has due regard for the current government guidance for safeguarding and is published on the school's website.
- The school's designated leader for safeguarding and her deputy are trained at the appropriate level. To meet the needs of the school's vulnerable pupils, they have also undertaken additional training in a range of safeguarding aspects, such as harmful sexual behaviours, mental health and e-safety. Staff receive regular safeguarding training which includes keeping them up to date on the latest government guidance.
- Leaders and staff are diligent in their duties. Detailed records of any concerns, communications and follow-up actions are kept. Leaders have established and make good use of strong links with outside agencies to support pupils and help them to stay safe. This includes social services across the five placing local authorities, the police and youth offending services.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe when out and about as well as online. Plans are in place to extend this to younger pupils.
- Leaders plan to appoint and train an additional designated safeguarding leader to support the safeguarding of pupils educated at the proposed new premises.

- The standard continues to be met.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraph 17, 18, 19, 20, 21

- Scrutiny of staff records shows that all of the required checks are carried out before staff are employed and commence working with pupils. This includes the right to work, barred list checks and enhanced criminal record checks for all staff. These are fully and accurately recorded on the school's single central record, in line with the current statutory guidance. At the current time the school does not make use of supply staff. However, the headteacher understands that she must ensure that the organisation employing the staff have undertaken all of the required pre-employment checks.
- The school meets all of the applicable requirements for this part of the independent school standards.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34

- The proprietor, who is also the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the two curriculum leaders have a clear vision for the extended age range. They wish to transfer their success with re-engaging pupils aged 14 to 16 with education to younger pupils. Once placed at the school, pupils in the current registered age range remain until they transfer into other education, training or employment at the end of Year 11. For pupils in key stages 1, 2 or 3 the ambition is that all will return to their placing schools to successfully continue with their education. Placements will be of varying length, according to pupils' needs. Most pupils will attend full time but for a few, attendances at the proposed provision will be on a part-time basis.
- The headteacher intends to educate pupils in key stages 1, 2 and 3 in separate premises. She and other leaders are well-equipped and aware of all the requirements of the independent school standards for health and safety. Plans for the premises were well advanced and included a full fire safety risk assessment by an expert consultant. However, these premises are no longer available. Alternative premises have recently been located but not yet secured. Consequently, any refurbishments and/or adaptations and the required health and safety checks have yet to be undertaken.
- The headteacher and other school leaders continue to demonstrate a secure knowledge of the independent school standards. An experienced early years and primary school teacher has been appointed as leader for the primary curriculum from September. However, she has been working for some time with the secondary-age group curriculum leader on the plans for teaching the extended age range.
- The headteacher has firm plans for staffing the new provision. Several teachers, including those already employed by the school on a part-time basis, have expressed interest in working at the new provision. Teaching to support pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development will be provided in part by staff from a performing arts school. Leaders are rightly waiting for formal approval before employing staff and fully implementing the curriculum plans.

- The school is likely to meet this part of the independent school standards if the material change is implemented.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school is likely to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that are relevant to the material change.

School details

Unique reference number	141247
DfE registration number	308/6003
Inspection number	10112881

This inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Type of school	Other independent school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Marina Savva
Headteacher	Marina Savva
Annual fees (day pupils)	£9,500
Telephone number	020 83615658
Website	focus1stacademy.org.uk
Email address	marina@focustraining.org.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	12–14 March 2019

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	14 to 16	5 to 16	14 to 16 at this time.
Number of pupils on the school roll	4 (21 Year 11 pupils have recently left)	90, with 25 in each of key stages 2, 3 and 4 and 15 in key stage 1.	No additional pupils at this time, but the school's proposal is reasonable.

Reason for inspector's recommendations

Leaders have in place sound organisational, curriculum and teaching plans for extending the school's age range to pupils in key stages 1, 2 and 3. The school has identified premises for the education of these pupils; however, currently no agreement is in place. The premises were visited but it was not possible to gain access to them on the day of the inspection. Consequently, the extension of the school's age range is not recommended at this time.

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	4 (21 Year 11 pupils left on 28 June 2019)	90
Number of part-time pupils	0	According to needs
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	0	Dependent on the pupils placed in the school
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	0	Dependent on the pupils placed in the school
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	0	0

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	5.56	21.56 (5.56 from current staff and 16 additional staff (two per class) for key stages 1, 2 and 3.)
Number of part-time teaching staff	4	At least 5; it will be dependent on the availability of staff
Number of staff in the welfare provision	0	0

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.
- This alternative provision is located in Arnos Grove, in the London Borough of Enfield, and it is currently registered to educate up to 25 pupils aged 14 to 16 years.
- The school caters for disaffected young people with a history of disrupted schooling, including those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Five different north London local authorities have referred the pupils who attend the school. Many pupils join at various points during the academic year. All pupils remain on roll at their secondary school.
- 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 has no religious affiliation.
- The school does not use any off-site provision.

Information about this inspection

- Ofsted conducted this inspection at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. It was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008.¹
- The inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education to consider the school's application for a material change to extend the age range of the school to cater for pupils aged 5 to 16.
- The inspector was asked to focus on these paragraphs of the independent school standards: 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 34. These related to the quality of education, pupils' safeguarding and leadership and management for the proposed change in the school's age range.
- The inspection was carried out with two days' notice.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, who is also the school's sole proprietor, the designated safeguarding leader, who is also the deputy headteacher, the curriculum manager and the manager for the primary curriculum, who will be employed from September.
- She also held a telephone conversation with the alternative provision manager of Haringey local authority and the headteacher of a school, both of whom place pupils at the school.
- The inspector visited lessons and spoke with pupils. She examined school safeguarding and curriculum documentation.
- She visited the proposed premises for the pupils in key stage 1, 2 and 3, accompanied by the school's headteacher. However, she was not able to gain access to see inside the building and evaluate their suitability.
- There was one response to the Ofsted online survey (Parent View), but this was too few to be shown.

Inspection team

Angela Corbett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

¹www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/25/contents.

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