

# SchoolsCompany Central Devon Academy

Falcon Road, Exeter, Devon EX2 7LB

## Inspection dates

4–5 July 2018

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>                 | <b>Inadequate</b>        |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   | <b>Inadequate</b>        |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | <b>Inadequate</b>        |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare  | <b>Inadequate</b>        |
| Outcomes for pupils                          | <b>Inadequate</b>        |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- The trust that opened the school in 2015 has failed to ensure that pupils are provided with an acceptable standard of education and care. The interim headteacher and interim executive board are aware of the radical changes required to address underperformance.
- Overall, the safeguarding of pupils is not effective. While there have been some recent improvements, not enough is being done to minimise risks to pupils and to keep them safe.
- Leaders at all levels, including subject leaders, do not effectively monitor or evaluate their areas of responsibility. They do not hold teachers to account for pupils' poor outcomes.
- Outcomes for all groups of pupils, including pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, are inadequate.
- Teaching is inadequate. Teachers are not given the training or guidance they require to improve their practice.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is not secure. This is especially so in the teaching of phonics.
- Assessment is not accurate. Teachers do not have a secure understanding of what pupils know, can do and understand. As a result, learning activities do not meet the needs of pupils. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low.
- The curriculum is weak. It does not provide pupils with the skills and experiences they need to achieve, and develop, well.
- Behaviour is inadequate. Pupils do not receive the therapy and guidance they need to reduce their anxieties and manage poor behaviour. Attendance is well below the national average.
- Staff morale, while improved in recent months, is low. Staff feel they have been left unsupported by the trust. Pupils' progress is impeded by high staff absence.

### The school has the following strengths

- Since her arrival in February 2018, the interim headteacher has raised staff morale and confidence.
- Current interim leaders from the ACE Schools Multi-Academy Trust have a very clear and accurate understanding of the school's significant weaknesses.
- The recently implemented policies and procedures are aimed appropriately at improving the quality of education pupils receive. However, they are too recent to have had any impact.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong.

## Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that safeguarding arrangements are effective and actions taken keep pupils safe
  - determining clear priorities for improving the quality of education and care for pupils which are carefully and regularly monitored and evaluated for impact by leaders, including governors
  - strengthening governance to ensure that governors carry out their roles and responsibilities to swiftly improve the quality of education and care pupils receive
  - implementing a planned cycle of monitoring to check that actions taken are making a difference to pupils' learning and development
  - providing high-quality training for subject leaders, and time in order for them to carry out their roles effectively
  - ensuring that robust plans are in place to check and monitor the performance of staff
  - ensuring that the curriculum and its implementation meets the needs of pupils and prepares them well for their futures
  - providing staff with high-quality guidance and support to improve their practice
  - taking action to reduce staff absence and improve staff morale.
- Quickly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
  - teachers raise their expectations of what pupils are able to achieve
  - teachers accurately assess what pupils can and cannot do so that learning activities precisely meet the needs of all pupils
  - teachers plan work which motivates, excites and challenges to enable pupils to concentrate and achieve well
  - teachers' subject knowledge is secure across all subjects, including in the teaching of phonics.
- Improve pupils' achievement to enable pupils to make good progress by ensuring that:
  - teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve across year groups and subjects, including in reading, writing and mathematics
  - pupils with gaps in their understanding are provided with high-quality teaching and learning opportunities to enable them to catch up quickly

- teachers consistently implement the school’s assessment policy in order to provide incisive feedback to pupils so that they know how to improve their work.
- Improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils by:
  - rapidly improving their rates of attendance
  - providing them with the guidance and support needed to minimise the risk of harm to their health and emotional well-being.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school’s use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Inadequate

- Systemic weaknesses in the trust's leadership have resulted in a failure to provide pupils with an effective standard of education. Leaders at all levels, including subject leaders, do not effectively monitor and evaluate their subjects or areas of responsibility. Leaders insufficiently challenge the low aspirations of teachers and too much teaching is not good enough.
- The curriculum is inadequate. Pupils are not provided with a breadth of learning opportunities, and this means that pupils do not make good progress across a range of subjects. The resourcing of the curriculum is poor; for example, in science, pupils do not have essential equipment in order to undertake experiments to develop and acquire the necessary knowledge and skills set out in the GCSE subject content.
- Therapeutic provision is inadequate. Pupils do not receive the therapy they urgently need to improve their emotional and mental well-being. This has a negative impact on their behaviour and prevents them and their peers from engaging positively in their learning.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities do not receive high-quality provision. Interventions, where there are any, are inadequate. Consequently, pupils are not helped to develop their knowledge and understanding.
- Additional funding is not spent appropriately. There is currently no accountability for the expenditure of pupil premium and sport funding. Leaders are unable to report on the impact this funding has on pupils' achievement and progress.
- It is recommended that the school should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.
- There were no responses received by parents or carers via the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. Parents who spoke to inspectors on the phone or emailed have mixed views. Some spoke positively about the quality of education and care their children receive. However, concerns were expressed with regards to the length of time their children are at the school with little being done to have them successfully reintegrated back into mainstream education.
- Current interim leaders from the ACE Schools Multi-Academy Trust have a very clear and accurate understanding of the school's significant weaknesses. While they are working hard to make the rapid improvements necessary, their tenure at the school has been short and is imminently due to end.
- The arrival of the interim headteacher has been extremely well received by staff and pupils, a typical comment being, 'The interim headteacher has been fantastic; she has worked extremely hard to make improvements.' Staff morale and confidence are improving but remain low due to the uncertainty in the school's future leadership arrangements. Pupils reported to inspectors how, as a result of the new interim headteacher, 'there are now structures in place and everyone gets treated the same.'

## Governance of the school

- The board of trustees and the local board of governors of the trust have not ensured that pupils are provided with an acceptable standard of education and care. The interim executive board, in place since February 2018, and the interim chief executive officer are working to make the radical changes necessary to turn this significantly underperforming school around. Finances of the school have been very poorly managed and the school continues to face significant financial challenges. In addition, staff have not received the necessary training and development to improve their practice and pupils do not have access to high-quality resources to support their learning.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are ineffective. While training for all staff has quickly been put in place by the interim leaders and the reporting of safeguarding concerns is improving, there remain too many gaps to ensure that there are adequate arrangements in place to safeguard pupils. For example, attendance is too low and on too many occasions staff do not know where pupils are and therefore cannot account for their safety.
- The quality of risk assessments to keep pupils safe is too variable. While inspection evidence shows that there are some detailed and enhanced risk assessments for the more vulnerable pupils, this is not yet common for all pupils. This means that the safety of pupils is compromised.
- The single central record meets statutory requirements. Leaders understand the importance of safe recruitment and appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that staff are checked for their suitability prior to starting in post.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Inadequate

- As a result of staff turbulence and staff absence, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has not been good enough. This means that pupils do not make good progress from their starting points.
- There is no performance management in place for staff. As a result, staff have no direction from leaders and are not held to account for the quality of education they provide for pupils.
- Teachers do not understand well enough how pupils learn best. They do not expect enough of their pupils. They do not check carefully what pupils already know, can do and understand. This means that the activities they plan do not meet pupils' needs. Work seen in books by inspectors confirms this has a negative impact on the progress pupils make.
- Subject knowledge of staff is not secure, especially in phonics. This is because staff do not have the guidance, training or support required in order to improve their practice.
- Teachers' questioning is weak. While there is evidence that questioning is used effectively by some teachers to check pupils understanding, for example in Year 10

science, teachers do not routinely probe pupils to think deeply enough to increase their knowledge and understanding.

- Teachers do not consistently adhere to the school's marking and feedback policy. Consequently, pupils do not receive the guidance they need in order to improve their learning. For example, in key stage 1 mathematics books, it was evident that errors pupils routinely make are not picked up and resolved.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

## **Inadequate**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate. Until very recently, leaders have not ensured that all concerns identified by staff are appropriately investigated, recorded and acted upon. Staff told inspectors of personal injuries that have not been taken sufficiently seriously or have been ignored by leaders.
- Pupils do not receive the therapy they need at the school or in the alternative provision. This means that, too often, they are unable to control their anxious behaviours, manage stress or maintain their well-being. As a result, some pupils become angry, which can lead to physical harm to themselves, each other, staff and property. This gets in the way of pupils' personal development. Pupils told inspectors that not enough is done for them to learn ways to manage their anxieties and improve their behaviour. They commented, 'We are all here for a reason, so there should be help put in place to tackle the very reason we are here.'

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate. While action taken by the interim leaders to improve pupils' behaviour is appropriate, over time, behavioural issues have not been tackled well enough to ensure that the behaviour of pupils is good enough.
- Leaders record behaviour incidents and incidents of physical restraint. However, these records lack detail, and systematic checks and analysis are not securely in place to monitor pupils' behaviour and reduce the frequency of incidents over time.
- Many pupils form good relationships with staff and learn to trust them. This means that they feel confident to share worries they may have.
- Attendance of pupils is poor and is significantly below the national average. Pupils are too often absent and this limits their personal development.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils, who were keen to talk. For example, key stage 4 pupils willingly shared their future aspirations and dreams, such as becoming an illustrator, and working in a veterinary practice.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Inadequate

- Outcomes are inadequate. This is because pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. Over time, there has been a consistent pattern of underachievement across a range of subjects, including in reading, writing and mathematics. This underachievement continues. This means that pupils are poorly prepared for the next stages of their education, training or employment.
- Information previously kept by the school on the achievement of pupils has recently been found to be largely inaccurate, including for pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 4. Therefore, leaders do not have an accurate picture of how well pupils are achieving in any subject, including English and mathematics. As a result, leaders confirm that teachers do not have the correct information to enable them to successfully provide learning that meets pupils' individual needs.
- Work in books across a range of year groups and subjects confirms that too many teachers have low expectations. For example, progress in reading, writing and mathematics is inadequate, and work in mathematics shows that pupils are not gaining the necessary skills to enable them to be successful when solving number problems or applying mathematical reasoning. Pupils are not provided with the opportunity to develop their writing skills across subjects. Too often, written work is unfinished or, at times, tasks are not attempted by pupils. This significantly hampers the progress pupils make.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to their peers, but it is not good enough. Additional funding specific to this group of pupils is not used effectively to improve their progress.
- Pupils identified as having SEN and/or disabilities are not having their needs met. Interventions to support these pupils are not in place. Consequently, these pupils do not make sufficient progress from their starting points.

## School details

|                         |          |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Unique reference number | 141676   |
| Local authority         | Devon    |
| Inspection number       | 10042649 |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Type of school                      | Pupil referral; Alternative provision  |
| School category                     | Academy sponsor-led  |
| Age range of pupils                 | 4 to 16  |
| Gender of pupils                    | Mixed  |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 149  |
| Appropriate authority               | Board of trustees  |
| Chair                               | Nikki King   |
| Interim Headteacher                 | Clare Martin   |
| Telephone number                    | 01392 445446   |
| Website                             | <a href="http://www.centraldevonacademy.com">www.centraldevonacademy.com</a>               |
| Email address                       | <a href="mailto:admin.central@schoolscompany.co.uk">admin.central@schoolscompany.co.uk</a> |
| Date of previous inspection         | Not previously inspected   |

## Information about this school

- Central Devon Academy opened in March 2015 as part of the SchoolsCompany Academy Trust.
- The academy works with pupils who have been excluded or who have additional needs that prevent them from attending school regularly. The expectation of the school is that pupils will successfully reintegrate into mainstream school or progress on to college or further training. Therefore, placements are intended to be short term.
- Central Devon Academy operates a site at Barrington Street in Tiverton.
- The trust use four alternative providers for the school's pupils: Outdoors South West and Elite Training South West, which are registered with Ofsted; South West Interventions Services and 121 Mentors, which are not registered with Ofsted.
- There is currently one child in the early years provision.

- The interim headteacher started in post in February 2018 when the ACE Schools Multi-Academy Trust took over the running of the school.
- There is an interim chief executive officer in post.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is well above the national average.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in classes, and many observations were conducted jointly with interim leaders. The quality of pupils' work was scrutinised.
- Inspectors visited the Barrington Street site in Tiverton to meet staff and view pupils' learning.
- Inspectors made visits with interim leaders to alternative providers to view the quality of provision for pupils in these settings.
- Meetings were held with the interim headteacher, interim leaders, the interim chief executive officer, subject leaders, staff and pupils. Inspectors took account of the 15 responses from staff questionnaires. The 15 responses received from pupils were also considered.
- A wide range of documentation was examined, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, development plans, and information relating to pupils' achievement and progress. Records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance were also scrutinised.
- There were no responses from parents via Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. However, correspondence received from parents was considered. Inspectors made phone calls to parents to listen to their views about the school.

## Inspection team

Jen Southall, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jen Edwards

Ofsted Inspector

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