

Inspection of The Anchor Sendfriendly Centre

3 North Road, Block E, Plumstead, London SE18 1BS

Inspection dates:

18 to 20 March 2025

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils benefit from the respectful and trusting professional relationships that staff build with them. Staff get to know pupils well. Pupils arrive at school smiling and keen to start their day. Many pupils have missed significant amounts of schooling prior to joining this school. Each pupil has their own personalised plan which helps them to settle into school life. As a result, pupils feel happy and safe.

The school wants all pupils to study an aspirational curriculum and to have experiences that prepare them for adulthood. Leaders take action to develop the right provision to meet the needs of pupils. However, many of these actions are not embedded. This means that there are inconsistencies in the quality of education for pupils. Pupils' behaviour is not as settled as it should be because pupils are not routinely supported by staff.

Pupils have opportunities to develop important life skills, such as learning to carry out housework, eat healthily and crossing the road safely. Pupils take part in and lead assemblies, recite poetry to their peers and perform in a Christmas show. All this helps pupils to develop their confidence and talents.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has in place a curriculum that is sequenced and is ambitiously designed to meet the complexity of learning needs of all pupils. When pupils join the school, leaders carefully check what pupils know and can do to ensure that pupils' learning takes account of their starting points. However, teaching does not ensure that pupils learn key knowledge and skills as intended. While lessons provide opportunities for pupils to practise and recall what they have learned previously, new learning is not introduced methodically. Lesson content is not taught in a logical order. This means that pupils do not typically build on what they already know and can do. It also means that some pupils are introduced to new learning before they have a secure understanding of what has come before. When this happens, pupils struggle to engage in activities and sometimes become dependent on the staff supporting them to help them complete work set.

Staff use learning goals that are matched to pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to create personalised learning programmes for pupils. Pupils work towards their individualised goals, such as strategies to manage their emotions or how to brush their teeth. This helps pupils to become independent and resilient. Personalised behaviour plans include techniques to help pupils with their emotional regulation and to develop composure. However, sometimes staff do not follow these plans closely. At times, learning is disrupted when pupils struggle to conduct themselves calmly. As a result, some pupils need to take time out of the classroom and consequently miss out on important learning.

The school works with, and receives advice and guidance from, a range of professionals and therapists. Staff receive training on how to support the different communication needs of pupils. However, sometimes this training is not put into practice effectively. At times, staff do not model or use communication resources as effectively as they need to. When this happens, pupils' independence is reduced.

The school is at the early stages of implementing a phonics programme. Where staff have not been trained, they lack the expertise needed to deliver the phonics programme effectively. As a result, pupils with gaps in their phonics knowledge are not supported to catch up as well as they need to be. Pupils have opportunities to read aloud to an adult. However, the books pupils read are not closely matched to the sounds that they know. This is not helpful in supporting pupils to become fluent and accurate readers.

The school has recently introduced award units in gardening, money matters and personal hygiene. These contribute to preparing pupils for adulthood, as well as providing some opportunities to develop pupils' interests. However, beyond these award units, the careers programme is underdeveloped. Pupils do not receive the support they need to make important decisions about their next steps in education or employment. Leaders have made attempts to strengthen this aspect of the school's work, but currently pupils do not routinely receive independent advice and guidance about a broad range of careers.

Pupils are encouraged to take care of themselves and be respectful of each other. They are taught about the beliefs and cultures of other people through a range of special days throughout the school year.

The proprietor does not fulfil their statutory responsibility to pay due regard to all the protected characteristics. The relationships education programme does not comply with statutory guidance. This means that pupils do not learn about protected characteristics at a timely point as part of the school's relationships education. They are not taught at appropriate ages about concepts of being safe, including sexual consent, harassment or abuse. As a result, pupils are not well prepared for life in modern Britain.

The school works with parents and carers to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. Staff work with parents to find solutions to improve attendance where needed. This includes, for example, home visits and providing strategies to help with morning routines. The school also makes referrals to other agencies to ensure that a broad range of support is available. As a result, pupils mostly attend well and attendance rates improve over time.

Staff feel well supported by leaders. New staff appreciate the support of existing staff, and work together to help one another. All staff say they are proud to work at the school and that school's leaders are considerate of their well-being and workload.

The proprietor has not ensured that the school complies with the independent school standards, this includes schedule 10 of the equality act. The proprietor and school leaders have developed actions plans to address areas that are in need of swift improvement. The school has actively sought advice and guidance from the local authority as well as from specialists including communication leads, therapists and behaviour experts. It is too early to see the impact of these actions, however they do demonstrate leaders' capacity to improve.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The relationships education programme does not comply with statutory guidance. The school does not fulfil its statutory responsibility to pay due regard to all the protected characteristics. Pupils are not well prepared for their future lives. The proprietor body and school leadership should make provision to promote respect for all the protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010 and ensure that the relationships education curriculum meets the statutory guidance.
- The school has not ensured that pupils have access to independent careers guidance and as a result pupils are not helped to make informed choices about a broad range of career options or encouraged to fulfil their potential. The school should ensure that pupils receive accurate, up-to-date careers guidance.
- Pupils at the early stages of learning to read and others who have weaknesses or gaps in their phonics knowledge do not receive the support with early reading that they need. As a result, they are not helped to read fluently and confidently. The school should ensure that all staff have the training they need to help pupils learn to read fluently and support weaker readers to catch up quickly.
- The school has not made sure that the sequenced curriculum is being implemented as intended. Teachers do not routinely follow the order of learning as set out in the curriculum. This means learning and teaching do not build pupils knowledge and skills cumulatively and securely. The school should that all staff have the knowledge and expertise to deliver the curriculum as intended so that pupils know and can do more over time.
- Pupils are not routinely given the support and guidance they need to communicate and to engage with their learning. This means that sometimes pupils behaviour declines, pupils become disengaged from learning and the development of pupils' independence is hindered. The school should ensure that

all staff have the resources and expertise needed to strengthen communication, support behaviour effectively and help pupils' engagement in learning.

How can I feed back my views?

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The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	149908
DfE registration number	203/6010
Local authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	10342207
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 25
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	23
Proprietor	Christalla Aggeli
Headteacher	Cynthia Burnham
Annual fees (day pupils)	£55,000 to £75,000
Telephone number	0203 651 4863
Website	www.thetascentre.co.uk
Email address	admin@thetascentre.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened in January 2024.
- This is an independent school for pupils with special educational needs between the ages of 4 and 25 years old. All the pupils have an education, health and care plan. Many pupils have communication difficulties or a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder.
- The school is based at 3 North Road, Block E, Plumstead, London, SE18 1BS.
- The school works closely with the onsite registered early years setting, who provide alternative provision for some pupils in key stage 1. The early years setting shares the same building as the school and senior leaders.
- The school does not make use of any other alternative provider.
- The current headteacher took up their post in April 2024. There have been many recent changes to the school's staffing team. Pupils are placed at the school by a several neighbouring local authorities.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English including early reading, mathematics and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, talked to pupils about their learning in these subjects and looked at their work.
- Inspectors also considered curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- Inspectors met with some pupils to discuss their views about the school, behaviour and safety. Inspectors met with some staff. Inspectors analysed the survey responses of pupils, staff and parents.

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, chief executive officer and proprietor and curriculum leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of policies and documents. Inspectors checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Kieran Bird, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Aliki Constantopoulou

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
 - 2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act[9];
 - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that-
 - 2(2)(e)(i) is presented in an impartial manner;
 - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
 - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential;
- 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor-
 - 2A(1)(a) ensures that every registered pupil who is provided with primary education at the school is provided with relationships education,
 - 2A(1)(b) ensures that every registered pupil who is provided with secondary education at the school is provided with relationships and sex education, except in so far as the pupil is excused as mentioned in sub-paragraph (2),
 - 2A(1)(d) in making arrangements for the purposes of paragraphs (a), (b) or (c), has regard to any guidance under section 80A of the Education Act 2002 that applies in relation to the provision of education by maintained schools,

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

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor-
 - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which-
 - 5(b)(vi) encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act;

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(c) actively promotes the well-being of pupils.

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