

# Open Box Education Centre

The Box, St John's Road, Epping, Essex CM16 5DN

## Inspection dates

22–24 May 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not yet got an effective system in place to measure pupils' attainment when they join the school. As a result, they are not able to measure pupils' progress accurately.
- Not all teachers are able to assess accurately what pupils know and can do in order to bring about improvements in teaching.
- The proprietor and leaders have not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- Teachers are not providing pupils with enough opportunities to deepen their learning.
- Teachers do not follow the school's marking and feedback policy consistently or make sure that pupils finish their work.
- Not enough pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning or take pride in their work.
- Some pupils do not attend school regularly. This has a negative effect on their learning.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders ensure that pupils are well cared for. Leaders work well with families and outside organisations to provide good levels of emotional support for pupils.
- Pupils are positive about the support that they receive.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Pupils feel safe and are taught how to keep themselves safe.
- Leaders and staff are determined to see the school improve. They understand there is still more to do to improve standards so that every pupil achieves their best.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Staff manage behaviour effectively.
- Parents are positive about the work of the school.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education ('Independent School Standards') Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - when pupils join the school, it has systems to measure their ability accurately so that teachers can set precise learning targets and measure the progress rigorously
  - all leaders, including governors, have a good understanding of the independent school standards and actively ensure that they meet all the requirements.
- Improve the attendance of all pupils by sharpening the existing work with the pupils and their families.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and, in so doing, pupils' outcomes by:
  - training teachers to identify the gaps in individual's learning so that they can effectively support pupils to catch up quickly
  - making sure more pupils take pride in the presentation of their work
  - ensuring that pupils complete unfinished work so that there are no gaps in their learning
  - making sure activities are planned to develop and deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding across a range of subjects
  - teachers following the school's marking and feedback policy consistently so that pupils know what to do to improve the quality of their work.
- The school must meet the independent school standards, as set out in the annex of this report.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- This is the first year that the school has been open as an independent school. Leaders have not met the independent school standards relating to teaching, learning and assessment. Pupils' outcomes are not consistently good.
- The aims of the school are to support pupils who, for a variety of reasons, have become disengaged from school and learning. The headteacher is passionate about providing the pupils in her care with the opportunity to develop both academically and socially into confident young people who can take their place in society.
- Leaders understand that there is still much to do in order to improve outcomes for pupils. They have correctly made improving pupils' emotional well-being a priority, developing links with external agencies and providing pupils with a curriculum designed to meet their needs and interests. Inspection evidence indicates that, while some pupils are still not interested in learning, an increasing number of pupils are beginning to take an interest.
- The school's curriculum meets the requirements of the independent standards and is broad and balanced. The main curriculum offers English, mathematics, science, physical education, fitness and emotional well-being, personal and social education, and includes accredited awards. Pupils have the chance to study history, geography, careers and world affairs through these awards.
- There is a wide choice of optional courses that allow pupils to study subjects that they may be interested in, for example business studies and horticulture.
- The provision for pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Pupils have the opportunity to discuss current and world affairs, different religions and cultures. Trips and visits form part of the curriculum. Pupils learn about fundamental British values and understand why they are important to life in Britain.
- All staff who expressed an opinion have confidence in the headteacher and are proud to work in the school. There is a strong sense of trust and teamwork among staff. A typical comment from staff was: 'We all support each other and we all know that we are making a difference to the lives of our pupils.'
- The school's website provides parents, carers and placing authorities with curriculum information, the application process and policies relating to pupils' safety and well-being.
- Formal reports are sent home each half term. Termly parent meetings keep parents informed about their child's progress. Parents say that a real strength of the school is the regular contact that they have with staff, often on a daily basis.

### Governance

- A new governing body has been established since the school opened. Governors report directly to the proprietor.
- Governors have focused on ensuring that the legal aspects of the school's work meet the necessary business requirements. They have not focused on monitoring whether the school meets the independent school standards. Governors do not yet have a full

understanding of the standards and the importance of regularly checking that the school is compliant.

- Governors are committed to improving the provision so that all pupils achieve good outcomes. They have an appropriate set of skills but have recognised the areas where they need further experience. They have recently appointed new members with an educational background. Governors acknowledge their weakness in being able to monitor the quality of teaching accurately.
- Governors have ensured that all policies are up to date and meet statutory requirements, especially those related to safeguarding pupils. Current governors have been appropriately trained in safeguarding.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leadership of safeguarding and child protection is very strong. There is a strong focus on keeping pupils safe and all staff are vigilant and immediately report any concerns about pupils.
- Policies and procedures for reporting any concerns are followed by staff. Record-keeping is meticulous and the safeguarding lead is tenacious in following up referrals with other agencies. Staff engage very effectively with parents, carers and other organisations to make sure that all pupils are supported and safe. One parent commented: 'I feel the school works with me to keep my child safe.'
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and are listened to. The curriculum is designed to educate pupils about keeping safe in a wide range of situations. It covers topics such as on-line safety, knife crime and drugs education.
- Procedures fully ensure that all the necessary pre-employment checks are conducted on all staff before they are able to work with pupils.
- Procedures to ensure that all staff receive relevant, up-to-date training are strong. Staff have received training on potential areas of risk for pupils, such as radicalisation and child sexual exploitation.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

## **Requires improvement**

- Pupils join the school throughout the year. Most have gaps in their learning due to disruption in their previous education. Leaders do not have an accurate method of accessing exactly what pupils know and understand in subjects such as English, mathematics and science when they arrive. Teachers spend a lot of time finding out where pupils are in their learning and this means progress is weaker when pupils are set work that is too easy or too hard for them.
- Teachers are not sufficiently skilled in identifying gaps in pupils' learning. This means that they do not plan work that allows pupils to catch up quickly. As a result, progress is not as strong as it should be.

- Teachers are not consistent enough in their expectations for what pupils will achieve. They are not all ensuring that pupils complete unfinished work. This leads to gaps in pupils' learning and it is not teaching them to persevere and complete their work. The presentation of pupils' work varies too much because not all staff insist that pupils take a pride in their work.
- There is not enough emphasis on pupils developing their learning. Pupils are able to explain what they are doing, for example preparing an electronic presentation, but not what they are learning as a result.
- Pupils are sometimes not sure how to improve their work. This is because not all staff are following the school's marking and feedback policy consistently.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are very positive. Staff are becoming increasingly skilled at planning work that interests pupils, that is relevant to everyday life and that allows them to apply literacy and numeracy skills across subjects, for example calculating and comparing the cost of ingredients from different supermarkets as part of a cookery lesson.
- The most able pupils are suitably challenged through GCSE courses. Inspectors saw examples of good questioning that developed pupils' understanding, and saw pupils really enjoying the challenge of their work. The pupils are prepared well for their examinations, as teachers have a good understanding of the examination requirements.
- Pupils have the opportunity to develop their communication skills through discussion work in subjects such as personal, social and health education and in early-morning activities. As a result, pupils are developing the skill of expressing balanced views about topics such as diversity, the rule of law and world affairs.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The emotional and social needs of pupils are very well supported. Pupils have access to a qualified counsellor who is employed by the school. Most pupils take advantage of this opportunity.
- When pupils arrive at the school, they have gaps in their knowledge and many have negative attitudes towards learning. Leaders rightly concentrate on improving pupils' self-confidence. This is done effectively and most pupils make good progress in their personal development.
- Pupils say that their experiences are better in this school than previously because staff have time for them and listen to them. The pupils say that this makes them feel valued.
- Leaders work with a whole range of agencies and organisations to ensure that the welfare needs of the pupils are met. The headteacher is relentless in referring pupils to agencies that are able to provide specialist support.
- Regular communication with parents and carers ensures that they are kept up to date

with developments. Any concerns and pupils' achievements are shared.

- Pupils are taught how to lead healthy lives through their personal, social and health education lessons and the physical education, fitness and well-being course. Pupils are able to choose from a range of sports that interest them, for example boxing and horse riding. Pupils are supported in developing their own strategies to help them manage their anger, develop communication and in managing relationships.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Records of behavioural incidents indicate that most pupils' behaviour improves over time. However, some are slow to settle to work and make little effort to take part in their learning.
- Many pupils have a history of poor school attendance. School records indicate that, for most pupils, attendance improves and, for a small minority, this improvement is rapid. However, there are still too many pupils who do not attend regularly, and when they do attend, they can be reluctant to take part in lessons. As a result, they are not making sufficient progress in their learning over time.
- Most pupils' behaviour improves because there are clear expectations of how pupils should behave. Staff are well trained in behaviour management and manage behaviour effectively. High importance is given to staff and pupils showing mutual respect for one another and in pupils learning to manage their behaviour. This is having a positive impact on some pupils who are showing signs of managing their behaviour without any prompts from adults.
- When pupils are having a bad day, adults persevere and work with them to get them back on track. Pupils who spoke to the inspector said that their behaviour had improved because they feel respected by staff who take the time to 'understand how we are feeling'.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- The depth of pupils' knowledge and understanding varies too much from their different starting points, especially in English, mathematics and science. This is because there is no system to identify accurately what pupils know and can do when they first join the school. As a result, staff cannot quickly address gaps in pupils' knowledge.
- All pupils take functional skills examinations at an appropriate level in English and mathematics.
- Pupils take BTEC qualifications in a range of subjects. Those who have the ability and determination are entered for GCSE examinations.
- The inspector saw evidence of good progress being made in art as pupils were able to explore a range of artists and experiment with different materials. Pupils are very proud of their work in this subject.

- Changes to the teaching of writing have led to an improvement in outcomes. Inspection evidence indicates that some pupils who were previously reluctant to write are now producing extended pieces of writing.
- Pupils are provided with impartial careers advice and follow a programme of careers education that supports them in making their post-16 choices.
- The school's information about what leavers go on to do shows that almost all secure a place in training, education or employment. The school continues to support the remaining pupils in securing a place.

## School details

Unique reference number	144818
DfE registration number	881/6069
Inspection number	10046994

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.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	14 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	17
Number of part-time pupils	3
Proprietor	Koinonia Youth Trust
Chair	Marjorie Austin
Headteacher	Alison Dolan
Annual fees (day pupils)	£18,775
Telephone number	01992 577 300
Website	<a href="http://www.openboxededucation.org.uk">www.openboxededucation.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@openboxededucation.org.uk">info@openboxededucation.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school opened in September 2017 after registration with the Department for Education (DfE). The school had been operating prior to that time but had not been registered.
- Open Box Education Centre is registered to provide full-time and part-time education for boys and girls aged 14 to 16. The school is owned by the Koinonia Youth Trust.
- Pupils attending Open Box Education Centre typically have a range of social, emotional and mental-health difficulties. Many have been excluded, or were at risk of being excluded, from their previous school.



- Pupils are referred to the school by the local authority and local secondary schools. Of the 17 pupils currently on roll, 10 have been referred by the local authority. Three of these pupils are supported by an education, health and care plan. The remainder of the pupils have been referred by local schools. Three pupils attend on a part-time basis.
- The school is not registered as a special school.
- The aim of the school is to meet the specific needs of pupils and to ensure their educational and personal development. The school aims to give pupils the educational, social and emotional skills that will help them successfully take their place in society.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- On 22 February 2017, Ofsted conducted a section 97 visit and inspectors found the provision to be operating as an unregistered school. The DfE issued a warning notice.
- The school applied to the DfE to register as an independent school in December 2016, before the February 2017 visit. The pre-registration inspection for the school was conducted by Ofsted on 18 July 2017. At that time, three of the independent school standards were judged unlikely to be met in relation to the facilities for pupils who become unwell and the suitability of the outdoor space.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out by one inspector over three days.
- This was the school's first full standard inspection since opening in September 2017.
- The inspector visited a number of lessons and scrutinised a variety of pupils' work to judge the quality of learning. She also spoke to a number of pupils about their work.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, two members of the governing body, subject leaders for English, mathematics and science and the finance manager. The inspector spoke informally to a number of staff and pupils.
- The inspector spoke on the telephone to a member of the local authority and leaders from two local schools that place pupils in the school.
- The inspector spoke to a parent who came into school. She phoned a number of other parents. Informal conversations were held with pupils to find out their views of the school and the inspector took note of the free-text response to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- The inspector toured the school premises.
- The inspector scrutinised a number of documents related to the curriculum, safeguarding, risk assessments about the school building, individual pupils and visits.
- The views of 12 members of staff who completed questionnaires were also considered by the inspector.

## Inspection team

Caroline Parry, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

### **The school must meet the following independent school standards**

#### **Part 1. Quality of education provided**

- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school –
  - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
  - 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
  - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.
  
- 4 The standard in this paragraph is met where the proprietor ensures that a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both, is in place.

#### **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.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

### Parent View

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2018