

Inspection of Music Stuff

Unit 2, The Cuthbert Centre, 877 Ashton Old Road, Manchester M11 2NA

Inspection dates: 7 to 9 February 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Many of the pupils who attend Music Stuff have experienced considerable disruption to their education prior to joining the school. Pupils said that staff help them to feel happy and safe at this school. Even so, leaders do not ensure that pupils are safe, nor do they provide a good enough quality education that enables pupils to achieve well. In addition, leaders do not make sure that some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive the timely support that they need to access the curriculum.

Staff help many pupils to develop more positive attitudes to school and to learning. However, some pupils are regularly absent from school. Typically, these pupils fall further behind with their learning. Added to this, some pupils do not engage well enough with their learning.

Typically, staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. They help pupils to learn how to regulate their own behaviour. Pupils enjoy social times together. In the main, pupils get on well together. Leaders and staff deal quickly and effectively with any fallings-out that arise between pupils, including bullying.

Some pupils have access to extra-curricular clubs. Overall, pupils benefit from appropriate enrichment activities. They learn the importance of staying fit and healthy. For example, pupils enjoy trampolining. That said, they do not learn enough to prepare them for life in modern Britain.

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

Recently, leaders have taken action to improve the design of the curriculum, especially in key stage 3. This is because the previous curriculum did not take sufficient account of pupils' aptitudes and starting points. The pupils who attend this school have faced considerable challenges in their previous schools. New leaders are thinking more carefully about the topics and concepts that pupils must learn to enable them to catch up with other pupils nationally. This is beginning to help pupils to learn more than they did in the past. However, pupils' achievement is variable. Some pupils, including those with SEND, do not learn as well as they should.

In some subjects, leaders have ensured that the curriculum is organised in a logical and coherent way. In these subjects, the newly designed curriculums increasingly reflect the ambition of the national curriculum. However, this is not replicated in other subjects. This means that, for these subjects, teachers do not know what knowledge should be taught and when this should happen. This hinders pupils' progress through the curriculum.

In a few subjects, some teachers do not have the subject knowledge that they need to deliver the curriculum well. At times, teachers do not select the most appropriate activities to deliver new curriculum content. In addition, some teachers do not use

leaders' assessment systems effectively enough. For example, leaders have not made sure that teachers check and address the gaps that pupils have in their knowledge. As a result, pupils struggle in some subjects, including in English. The gaps in pupils' learning sometimes mean that they become disengaged during lessons. This leads to low-level disruption that impacts on the learning of others.

Leaders have taken very recent action to raise the profile of reading. However, the reading curriculum does not fully enable some pupils to develop fluency and stamina. Those pupils who struggle to read do not have the strategies to decode unfamiliar words. This frustrates them.

Leaders take steps to identify the additional needs of pupils with SEND. Some teachers are well equipped to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. They offer helpful support to ensure that these pupils learn. In contrast, other teachers are less skilled in adapting the delivery of the curriculum to help pupils with SEND learn all that they should.

Some pupils achieve qualifications that enable them to move on to post-16 education, training or employment. Leaders provide effective careers information, education, advice and guidance that help pupils to work towards a career pathway.

Leaders do not have sufficient oversight across the school. They have not ensured that teachers across the different sites deliver the curriculums as they should. Leaders do not use the information that they collect about pupils' attendance, and their learning and achievement, effectively. Leaders do not have an accurate understanding of why pupils achieve better in some subjects than in others.

Leaders have not designed a well-considered programme of wider opportunities to promote pupils' personal development. For example, pupils do not learn enough about different religions and public institutions. They lack a well-developed sense of personal responsibility. For instance, leaders do not ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to take on leadership responsibilities. However, pupils do have access to age-appropriate relationships and sex education.

The proprietor does not have sufficient regard for the independent school standards ('the standards'). The proprietor and those responsible for governance do not carry out their statutory duty to ensure that pupils are kept safe and achieve well. They do not hold leaders sufficiently to account for the quality of education that the school provides.

The proprietor has failed to ensure that regular safety checks take place. Inspectors found several breaches of required health and safety practices. These failings included non-compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. For example, inspectors found a locked fire door and an absence of firefighting equipment on one site. The proprietor and leaders were not able to produce records of regular fire drills.

The proprietor and leaders do not demonstrate the knowledge required to identify and manage risks. Leaders' agreed that health and safety and risk assessment procedures have not been implemented.

The proprietor does not provide leaders and staff with adequate training to ensure pupils' welfare when at school. For example, leaders and staff are unclear about their roles and responsibilities to clean and maintain the school sites. The proprietor does not ensure that the accommodation or facilities at the school are kept clean and tidy. Furthermore, the proprietor has not provided pupils with a safe and clean place to play and exercise outdoors.

The proprietor and leaders do not have evidence of regular checks of water safety, including checks for legionella. Neither does the proprietor carry out visual checks on the condition of the rooms and outdoor areas used by pupils. Leaders do not ensure rigorous record-keeping, such as documentation outlining the use of first aid.

The proprietor has not made sure that all the sites have working external lighting to ensure that staff and pupils can leave and enter the building safely when it is dark. In some parts of the school, pupils do not have warm water to wash their hands. In other parts, the water is so hot that it causes a scalding risk.

The proprietor does not ensure that leaders adhere to rigorous safer recruitment procedures, such as finding out and recording the reasons why applicants have gaps in their employment history.

The school has a suitable accessibility plan which complies with the Equality Act 2010.

The staff who spoke with inspectors said that despite the challenges that their roles bring, they find their work rewarding. They value the support that leaders provide. Staff said that they find leaders approachable and willing to listen to any concerns, including about their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders do not understand how to identify and manage the risks to pupils' welfare and safety. Consequently, leaders do not ensure that pupils remain safe while at school.

Leaders do not make timely checks on pupils when they are absent from school. They do not have sufficient oversight of pupils who may be missing from education.

Staff identify and record safeguarding concerns about pupils. However, leaders do not act on this information in a timely manner. This means that some pupils who are at risk of harm do not get the support that they need.

Leaders do not ensure that safeguarding records are consistently clear. As a result, they cannot quickly and accurately form a view of whether pupils, all of whom are vulnerable, require support from external agencies to keep them safe.

Leaders have published the safeguarding policy on the school's website. Leaders amended this policy during the inspection to ensure that it reflected the most up-to-date statutory guidance.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. They recognise the signs of healthy and unhealthy relationships.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders do not have adequate systems in place to ensure the welfare and safety of pupils across the five school sites. As a result, pupils are put at unnecessary risk of harm. Leaders must take urgent action to review the school's systems and procedures, to manage the risks that pupils may face.
- The proprietor and governors do not hold leaders to account for the quality of education that pupils receive. They do not ensure that the standards are met. As a result, pupils do not learn and achieve as well as they should. The proprietor and governors must strengthen their oversight of the school. They must ensure that the school meets the standards.
- Leaders have not finalised their curriculum thinking in some subjects. This means that teachers are unclear about the important subject knowledge that pupils must learn to enable them to catch up with their peers. Furthermore, teachers have not had sufficient training and support to develop their subject knowledge. This means that the delivery of the curriculum is patchy. Leaders must finalise their curriculum thinking and ensure that teachers have the subject expertise to deliver the curriculum as intended.
- Some teachers do not know how to adapt the delivery of the curriculum for pupils with SEND. This prevents pupils from achieving well. Leaders should ensure that teachers are appropriately trained to select the most suitable activities to help pupils, including those with SEND, to learn.
- Some teachers do not use leaders' assessment systems effectively. As a result, teachers do not address the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment information well to backfill any gaps in pupils' knowledge of the different subjects that they study.
- The reading curriculum is not fully effective. This means that pupils who find reading more difficult struggle to catch up with their peers. Leaders should refine the reading curriculum to meet the learning needs of pupils in the school.
- Leaders do not ensure that all pupils attend school regularly enough. Consequently, some of these pupils fall further behind in their learning, which frustrates them. This leads to some behavioural issues, including low-level

disruption. Leaders must ensure that pupils attend school more regularly so that they can access the curriculum and develop more positive attitudes to learning.

- Leaders' curriculum to promote pupils' personal development is under-developed. This prevents pupils from being fully prepared for life in modern Britain. Leaders should ensure that their programme to support pupils' personal development prepares them well for life in a diverse society.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

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

School details

Unique reference number	137887
DfE registration number	352/6006
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10266993
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	101
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Andrew Portersmith
Chair	Jeff Mills
Headteacher	Dan McCann
Annual fees (day pupils)	£11,000 to £27,500
Telephone number	0161 223 7800
Website	www.musicstuffeducation.org
Email address	musicstuff@musicstuffeducation.org
Date of previous inspection	12 to 14 December 2018

Information about this school

- The school's previous standard inspection was on 12 to 14 December 2018.
- The address registered for this school on the Department for Education's (DfE) website, 'Get Information About Schools' (GIAS), is Unit 2, The Cuthbert Centre, 877 Ashton Old Road, Manchester M11 2NA. The school operates from this site and from four other locations. These other premises are at: Fog Lane, Burnage, Manchester M20 6FJ; 599 Ashton New Road, Clayton, Manchester M11 4UA; Unit 1, The Cuthbert Centre, 877 Ashton Old Road, Manchester M11 2NA; and 26A Wilbraham Road, Fallowfield, Manchester M14 6JU.
- A new headteacher has been recently appointed. There have also been several other changes to leadership roles.
- The school's current number on roll exceeded the agreed capacity that the school was registered for on GIAS at the time of the inspection, which was 51. Leaders have agreed a greater capacity of 70 pupils with the DfE since the inspection. The number on roll still exceeds the capacity agreed with the DfE.
- All pupils at this school have social, emotional and mental health needs. Around one third of pupils have an education and health care plan.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.

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.

- This was the first routine inspection that 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 spoke with the headteacher and other leaders in the school.
- The lead inspector met with the proprietor and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors checked a range of documentation relating to safeguarding. This included the school's single central record, staff training records, safeguarding records and samples of the records kept on individual pupils.
- An inspector conducted a tour of the premises at each of the five sites that the school operates from.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at social times and at the beginning and end of the school day.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, including early reading, mathematics, humanities, art and design, and personal, social, health and economic education. Inspectors spoke with the curriculum leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils about their learning. An inspector listened to pupils read. Inspectors also considered the curriculums in other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online surveys for pupils. Inspectors spoke with a range of pupils to gather their views of the school.

Inspection team

Claire Cropper, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tim Sherriff

Ofsted Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted 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(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work-
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan; and
- 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(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005[12].
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

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

- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 18(2)(c) the proprietor carries out appropriate checks to confirm in respect of each such person-
 - 18(2)(c)(iv) where appropriate, the person's qualifications.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 23(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2), the standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 23(1)(a) suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided for the sole use of pupils.
- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.
- 27 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 27(b) external lighting is provided in order to ensure that people can safely enter and leave the school premises.
- 28(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 28(1)(b) toilets and urinals have an adequate supply of cold water and washing facilities have an adequate supply of hot and cold water;
 - 28(1)(d) the temperature of hot water at the point of use does not pose a scalding risk to users.
- 29(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable outdoor space is provided in order to enable-
 - 29(1)(b) pupils to play outside.

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; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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