

# Inspection of Music Staff

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

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Inspection dates: 11 to 13 March 2025

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils enjoy being part of this caring and nurturing school. Staff go to great lengths to ensure that they get to know each pupil as an individual. This helps pupils to build up trusting relationships that make them feel safe and happy in school.

Pupils have a chance to make a fresh start at this school. They succeed in education where they have struggled previously in other settings. Pupils settle quickly into the routines of school life when they join Music Stuff. They begin to learn successful techniques for managing their emotions. This helps the school to provide a calm learning environment.

The school has high expectations of pupils' academic learning. This helps pupils, all of who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to achieve well. Many have found learning difficult in the past. When they join this school, they develop the confidence that they need to re-engage with their education. The school's positive work to prioritise social and emotional development helps pupils to be ready for adulthood. Pupils build important skills, such as resilience, independence and forming relationships, extremely well over time.

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

The school has improved rapidly since the previous standard inspection in February 2023. It has redesigned its curriculum successfully. The school also has a renewed focus on supporting the behaviour and personal development of pupils positively. Added to this, the proprietor now has a more rigorous oversight of the school's work than in the past. It has ensured that all of the independent school standards (the standards) are met. The proprietor and school leaders have robust systems to ensure that these standards are checked regularly. The school's statutory duties, including compliance with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, are carried out effectively. As a result of these changes, staff morale is high. Staff share the school's renewed vision. Pupils benefit from staff's positivity, because it encourages them to strive for success.

All pupils in the setting have SEND. The school gains a strong understanding of pupils' prior learning quickly once they arrive. Staff are provided with clear guidance and training to support these pupils effectively. The school identifies any additional needs accurately. This information helps staff to adapt their teaching and remove any barriers to pupils' learning effectively. Those pupils who are at the earliest stages of learning to read get the help they need to catch up swiftly.

Pupils study a well-organised curriculum that captures their interests well. In most subjects, the school has thought carefully about the most important information that pupils should learn. Staff have strong subject knowledge. They benefit from high-quality professional development that helps them to teach the curriculum effectively. Staff explain new learning clearly. The checks that staff make on pupils' understanding are generally regular and useful. This means that gaps in learning or

misconceptions are typically identified and addressed quickly. However, occasionally, teachers' checks do not identify where pupils have not remembered new learning as well as is needed. When this happens, pupils do not learn as securely as they should.

Pupils usefully learn to understand their own needs. They are supported skilfully to recognise when they need a break to manage their emotions. Staff help pupils return to learning as quickly as they can. Pupils often have a history of poor attendance at their previous schools. This school uses a range of effective strategies to help pupils to re-engage with education. These are successful for many. However, some pupils' attendance remains stubbornly low. This means that they miss important social, emotional and academic learning. Furthermore, the school does not analyse which strategies are the most effective in raising pupils' attendance. This makes it hard for the school to have a continued positive impact.

The school's curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education supports pupils' personal development well. The school supports pupils to learn about keeping themselves safe and how to avoid risks online. As a result, pupils understand the risks they may face in the community, such as drugs, alcohol, and knife crime. Pupils appreciate being involved in projects where they can help others. For instance, pupils made and sold bracelets recently to raise money for a local charity. Pupils receive suitable independent careers advice and guidance about further education, employment and training. This helps them to be prepared well for their next steps beyond school.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

### **What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)**

- Teacher's checks on pupils' understanding are not applied consistently. This means that, at times, pupils develop misconceptions that are not identified or corrected. As a result, sometimes pupils' learning is insecure. The school should ensure that staff check pupils' learning carefully and adapt learning activities accordingly.
- The number of pupils who are persistently absent remains high. This means that some pupils do not benefit as often as they should from the good quality of education that the school provides. The school should ensure that its strategies to improve pupils' attendance have a sustained and secure impact.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137887
<b>DfE registration number</b>	352/6006
<b>Local authority</b>	Manchester
<b>Inspection number</b>	10342077
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	94
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	7
<b>Proprietor</b>	Andrew Portersmith
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lyndsey Murray
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£15,000 to £48,020
<b>Telephone number</b>	07947 754132
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.musicstuffeducation.org">www.musicstuffeducation.org</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:musicstuff@musicstuffeducation.org">musicstuff@musicstuffeducation.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	7 to 9 February 2023

## Information about this school

- The address registered for this school is Unit 2, The Cuthbert Centre, 877 Ashton Old Road, Manchester M11 2NA. The school also operates from Unit 1 and Units 3 to 4 at the same location. In addition, the school operates from two other locations in Manchester: Fog Lane, Burnage, Manchester M20 6FJ and Wilbraham Road, Fallowfield, Manchester M14 6JU.
- The last standard inspection took place on 7 to 9 February 2023. Since then, there have been two progress monitoring visits which took place on 23 and 24 January 2024 and 8 and 9 October 2024.
- The school's current number of pupils on roll exceeds the capacity of 70 agreed by the Department for Education (DfE).
- All pupils at this school have social, emotional and mental health needs. Some pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use 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 meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in 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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, subject leaders and other staff. The lead inspector met with the proprietor and representatives of the governing body.
- The lead inspector made a tour of all school sites to check that each met the standards relating to premises.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, art and design and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation to check compliance with the standards. These included school policies, the school development plan and the information the school provides to parents and carers.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

### **The school's proposed change to the maximum number of pupils**

The school has applied to the DfE to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school meets the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- **The outcome of this part of the inspection is: the school meets the independent school standards relevant to the material change. The material change has already been implemented.**

### **Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

*Paragraphs 7 to 7(b)*

- The proprietor has ensured that there is a comprehensive safeguarding policy in place. It includes the most current statutory guidance for safeguarding pupils. The policy is published on the school's website. It is supported by effective arrangements to keep pupils safe and to promote their welfare. For example, staff have the training and support that they need to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. Staff understand the particular vulnerabilities of the pupils who attend the school.
- The designated safeguarding lead is supported well by the deputy safeguarding leads. Staff receive appropriate safeguarding training during induction, regular updates and briefings. Any concerns are recorded diligently by staff and the school takes swift and appropriate action.

*Paragraphs 11, 12, 16(a) and (b)*

- The proprietor has a written health and safety policy, which is tailored to the premises of the school. It complies with all relevant laws. There are robust monitoring procedures in place to ensure that all health and safety checks are completed regularly. Leaders carry out regular fire-safety checks of the premises and these are logged suitably. Fire-evacuation routes are lit clearly and signposted. All classrooms have an emergency door and a route out to a place of safety. The proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. These arrangements are suitable to accommodate the proposed increase in the number of pupils on roll, should it increase.
- A written risk assessment policy is in place. A range of risk assessments show that the school takes appropriate actions to reduce any identified risks to pupils, should the number on roll be increased.

#### *Paragraph 14*

- Pupils are supervised suitably, including when arriving and leaving school and at break times. Staffing levels are high. Additionally, staff provide effective support and supervision at break and lunchtimes. The number of staff will help to ensure that pupils will continue to be supervised appropriately throughout the school day should the number of pupils on roll increase.

#### **Part 4. Suitability of Staff**

- The single central record (SCR) is in place and contains all the necessary checks and information. The school completes all the required checks on the suitability of staff before they take up appointment.
- Records relating to the proprietor are included on the SCR. All the suitability checks, including those relating to the leadership and management of the school, have also been carried out.
- Leaders have completed appropriate safer recruitment training to support the appointment of suitable staff to work in a school. They have ensured that any new employees have the experience that they need to meet the needs of the pupils in the school. The induction programme for new staff ensures that they undergo a wide range of safeguarding and other related training upon appointment.

#### **Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- The proprietor has ensured that there are distinct rooms and spaces on each site. For example, there are designated classrooms for science, mathematics, art and design and English. The premises are maintained to a high standard. The school building will cater effectively for the proposed increase in the number of pupils should the material change be approved.
- There are suitable toilet facilities in the school building for the sole use of pupils. There are separate toilet cubicles that can be secured from the inside. There are sufficient toilet facilities to accommodate the proposed increase in numbers.
- There is changing accommodation and showers for secondary-age pupils to use. These areas are clean and suitable for pupils to use following physical education. They can accommodate the proposed increase in numbers, should the material change be approved.
- There are designated medical rooms on each site for pupils in the school to use. Each has a bed, pillow and blanket. There is easy access to toilet and washing facilities. The rooms are equipped with first-aid kits. There is a separate room with a lockable medicine cabinet situated in the school.
- The accommodation is maintained to a high standard. It meets all requirements for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of pupils, including should the material change be approved. The building is bright, clean and tidy. All of the rooms used by pupils have appropriate acoustics, lighting and heating, suitable for the purpose of the different rooms. There is external lighting to ensure that pupils, staff, parents and visitors can enter and leave the sites and buildings safely in the hours of darkness.



- There is an adequate supply of hot and cold water. Drinking-water is labelled clearly and available for pupils throughout the day.
- The school grounds provide sufficient outdoor space for pupils and will easily accommodate the proposed increase in pupil numbers. All pupils have access to a safe and secure outdoor area to play in when not in lessons. The outdoor space is suitable for physical education lessons. However, the school also makes use of a nearby sports centres for this purpose.

### **Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- Leaders demonstrate the knowledge required to accommodate this material change request. They have rigorous systems in place to ensure that the standards are consistently maintained. They fulfil their responsibilities to promote the welfare, health and safety of pupils.

### **Inspection team**

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