

Music Stuff

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

Inspection dates

12–14 December 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors have improved the school significantly since the last inspection. Together with the proprietor, they have ensured that all the independent school standard are met.
- Leaders set a clear vision for the school, which is based on developing pupils' potential and increasing their self-belief.
- The proprietor's moral purpose and drive have ensured provision has evolved to meet the needs of vulnerable young people in the area.
- The headteacher has successfully driven improvements in teaching and learning. Leaders at all levels make a good contribution to school improvement.
- Teaching staff know each pupil's social, emotional and learning needs in detail. They have good subject knowledge and develop effective individual learning plans.
- Limited reading skills and vocabulary are a barrier for some pupils. These skills are developed effectively in support programmes and several subjects. However, the most effective practice is not used in all subjects.
- Staff's sensitive support helps pupils to grow in confidence and self-esteem. Pupils develop positive attitudes to learning and their behaviour improves the longer they are in the school.
- Pupils who attend school full time make the most gains in their learning and personal skills. Attendance is a constant challenge, although it improves as pupils settle into the school.
- Good teaching and a carefully planned personalised curriculum support pupils to make good progress. Pupils acquire a number of useful qualifications.
- Occasionally, work for pupils is too difficult for them to complete independently.
- Staff are vigilant in ensuring the safety, and mental and physical health of pupils. Pupils feel safe in school and develop their understanding of how to stay safe in the wider community.
- Pupils' growing personal skills, good-quality advice on further education and good progress in their learning equip pupils well for their next steps.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve pupils' progress, by:
 - ensuring that pupils of all abilities develop fluency in reading and develop their comprehension skills across the curriculum
 - developing and extending pupils' vocabulary in all subjects
 - ensuring that the work set for pupils is not too difficult and they have sufficient time to complete activities independently
 - ensuring that pupils attend regularly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The proprietor and headteacher set a clear vision for the school, which is based on developing pupils' potential and increasing their self-belief. Their drive and commitment are supported by a highly motivated staff team. Staff say, for example, that leaders 'inspire, support and challenge staff and pupils'.
- The school provides a safe environment where pupils increasingly engage with learning and experience success. Staff work together to develop individual learning and behaviour plans that meet pupils' needs. They tailor the provision effectively to help each pupil achieve well and to secure their physical and mental health.
- Leaders at all levels have clear roles and responsibilities. Centre managers lead provision at each site effectively. They ensure pupils' healthcare and personal needs are met and oversee their academic progress.
- Strong partnership working is a key strength. Leaders work closely with Manchester Secondary Pupil Referral Unit (MSPRU), which commissions all places. Provision is enhanced with support from the MSPRU special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) team and children looked after team. Leaders also work in partnership with child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and various agencies specialising in the promotion of health and safety, to promote the well-being of pupils.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and school improvement planning is focused on the most important priorities. Planning has been modified as required, since the plan was submitted for evaluation to Ofsted.
- Leaders check carefully on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in their learning. They provide useful feedback that supports teachers to improve. They have put support plans in place to help inexperienced teachers and share effective practice across the school. Leaders welcome additional quality assurance, and evaluations of teaching and learning that have been validated by MSPRU leaders.
- Leaders invest in good-quality training for staff. Teaching assistants are supported to achieve higher level teaching assistant status. Teachers are encouraged to take further qualifications. All staff are encouraged to take a range of certified courses that support their work with pupils, for example in behaviour management and supporting pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Training is planned carefully to support improvement priorities and the individual needs of staff.
- Many pupils have gaps in their learning and complex mental health, social, emotional and behavioural needs. Assessment of pupils' needs on entry to the school is thorough. Some pupils begin with a part-time, modified curriculum initially and build up to a full-time curriculum. Improving attendance and reducing fixed-term exclusions remain as challenges for leaders, but actions are beginning to have a positive impact.
- Leaders have developed a curriculum that is accessible and balanced. It supports pupils' emotional needs, builds their resilience and helps them to achieve academic success. Pupils who need intensive support are provided with individual tuition, with help from specialists.

- The personalised approach supports pupils to attain a range of qualifications suited to their ability and aspirations. Pupils have access to qualifications in functional skills in English, mathematics and science, and awards in performing arts and technology. Some pupils take GCSEs in English, mathematics, art or science. Pupils also experience a range of physical activity in centres and outdoor spaces outside the school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is promoted extremely well. It is a high priority in teaching and learning across the curriculum. For example, pupils learn about different faiths and cultures and are encouraged to challenge racial stereotyping. They discuss moral issues and topical news, showing respect for the views of others. Their understanding of moral issues is deepened through the support of experts from a range of agencies. Pupils learn about risks associated with extremist views, for example.
- The school prepares pupils positively for life in modern Britain. British values are taught explicitly and reinforced within the running of the school. Pupils cover a range of topics in personal, social and health education, which explore British values and diversity in society. The school council is elected democratically and supports the running of the school. Pupils' experiences are enhanced with trips out and visitors to the school, including, for example, religious leaders and community leaders.
- The richness of the curriculum is reflected in good-quality displays around the school. As well as supporting learning, the displays promote tolerance, the understanding of difference, and respect. There is a positive culture within the school. Pupils are taught about, and show respect for, people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act.
- The proprietor and leaders ensure that all the independent school standards are met. The unmet standards identified at the last inspection have been fully resolved.

Governance

- The governing body consists of the proprietor, headteacher, chair of the governing body and two other governors. Governors have improved provision and ensured that it has evolved to meet the changing needs of vulnerable young people in the area. They focus on supporting pupils to overcome barriers to achieve their potential.
- Governors are knowledgeable and experienced. They are well informed about the strengths and development areas. They have ensured that areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been addressed.
- Staff well-being is a high priority for governors and they do all they can to support staff in their work. Governors invest in good-quality training and resources to support staff. They manage the performance of the headteacher and oversee staff appraisal effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and all staff are vigilant in ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils in school. Pupils' mental and physical health and safety are prime considerations in the work of the school. The most vulnerable pupils, including those with child protection plans, children in need and children looked after by the local authority, are extremely well supported.
- Leaders work in close partnership with a range of other agencies to safeguard pupils. This

includes MSPRU, SEND teams, CAMHS, children looked after services, social care and healthcare services. Commissioned transport every day ensures that vulnerable pupils are conveyed safely to and from school. Drivers are checked and trained in safeguarding.

- All staff have completed safeguarding training relevant to their roles and have a full understanding of their responsibilities. In addition, staff are trained in health and safety, first aid, fire safety, crisis intervention and physical restraint. All staff have completed training in the 'Prevent' duty. Staff have also completed additional training to support their work with the vulnerable pupils at the school, including, for example, in understanding autism spectrum disorder and mental health difficulties.
- The school premises are safe and secure. They have been renovated and improved since the last inspection. Annual health and safety reviews and frequent risk assessments ensure that requirements are met.
- Policies and procedures have been updated since the last inspection. The safeguarding and related policies take account of current government requirements and are available on the school's website. Procedures to ensure the safe recruitment of staff meet requirements.
- Leaders engage effectively with parents and carers and stakeholders to make sure that all pupils are supported and safe. Their attendance is tracked carefully, reported to the MSPRU daily and followed up if necessary. Registers are kept accurately so the whereabouts of pupils are known at all times.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils enter school at any time during the academic year. Their length of stay ranges from two weeks to two years. Pupils' prior learning and their social, emotional and behavioural needs are assessed thoroughly when they enter the school. Their changing learning and behavioural needs are assessed fully each week. The individual learning plans that arise from these assessments are detailed and support learning successfully.
- Pupils are given ambitious targets for learning and behaviour. Small-group and individualised instruction, based on pupils' individual learning plans, supports pupils to make good progress from their different starting points.
- Teachers and teaching assistants know the pupils extremely well. They know their strengths, and check out their prior learning and build on it successfully. Topics and themes in learning are chosen carefully to interest and motivate pupils. For example, contemporary books that reflect pupils' experiences are used in English, and history topics are chosen that tie in with pupils' interests. Teaching assistants support learning effectively.
- Teaching staff have strong subject knowledge. They adapt teaching skilfully as gaps in pupils' learning or ease of completing tasks become apparent. For example, in mathematics, additional challenge was added for the most able pupils when working out the area and circumference of circles. In computing and science, teachers took time to explain key vocabulary when it became clear that pupils had limited prior knowledge.
- Effective teaching is supported by skilled explanation and exemplification, questioning and probing of pupils' understanding. In art, for example, pupils gained confidence in using textiles following the teacher's clear exemplification. In English, the teacher clearly

explained the success criteria for writing a critique about an author's use of emotive language.

- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are developed well in all subjects. Pupils are encouraged to share their ideas, reflect on their work and think about how it could be improved. Some pupils have limited vocabulary, which inhibits their learning across the curriculum. Some teachers are very good at extending pupils' vocabulary, but the most effective practice is not evident in all subjects.
- Pupils' writing skills are developed well across the curriculum. Pupils gain a good understanding of the features and purpose of different types of texts. Pupils' mathematical knowledge and skills are developed well. Gaps in learning are identified effectively and resolved.
- Reading resources are of good quality and pupils are encouraged to read widely. Pupils with very low reading ages are supported to develop their skills effectively in individual support programmes. Pupils who are not provided with additional support also lack fluency in reading and comprehension, but their skills are developed as explicitly as those of lower ability. While pupils' reading is developed effectively in English, it is not developed as effectively in all subjects. The development of the teaching of reading remains a focus in school improvement planning.
- Teaching is typically planned well, with the right amount of support and challenge to meet pupils' needs. Occasionally, adults are drawn in to do the work for pupils because the activity is too difficult for pupils to complete independently. Sometimes adults are too quick to support, without giving pupils time to think or work things out for themselves. Where work is highly supported, pupils find it difficult to retain learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Positive, encouraging relationships support pupils to grow in confidence and self-esteem. Provision is adapted successfully to meet the needs of pupils. Staff are adept in identifying what they can do differently to help pupils engage in their learning and overcome their social, emotional and behavioural barriers to learning.
- Staff skilfully reduce potential problems by sensitive intervention. They are constantly alert to risk and proactive in preventing the development of negative behaviour. 'Time-out' is used productively to allow pupils to talk about their concerns and calm down.
- Pupils feel and are safe in school. They say that staff help them to learn and 'feel secure, relaxed and at ease' at school. They value highly the support and opportunities they receive, saying, for example, 'I've been helped to turn my life around,' and, 'it's like a happy family'. Pupils feel free from bullying and harassment at school. Records show that any incidents are dealt with effectively. There are few recorded incidents of bullying.
- Pupils' physical and mental health are promoted successfully. Leaders engage productively with professionals from independent agencies, healthcare, social care and education providers to provide an expert 'team around the child'.

- Pupils' understanding of how to keep safe and healthy in the wider community is promoted across the curriculum. It is deepened by support from experts within and outside the school. For example, pupils learn about sexual health, harmful effects of substance misuse, and the risks associated with gang culture, car crime, carrying knives and extremism, from experts and in meaningful ways.
- Pupils receive good-quality, impartial careers education and advice from local colleges and careers advisers. The school's work to help pupils develop resilience and work-related skills helps pupils to access further education on leaving the school at the end of Year 11. Currently, links with local employers and pupils' opportunities to access work experience are limited. However, leaders have already begun to develop some productive links.
- Parents who made their views known are positive about the impact of the school's work. They say, for example, 'it's remarkable what they're achieving with my child. The staff persevere and support their learning and personal development. They're amazing.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Staff help pupils to manage their own behaviour by developing their self-awareness and helping them control their impulses. Pupils develop more positive attitudes to learning during their time at school. Behaviour improves significantly as they get used to the school's ethos and high expectations of teachers and other pupils.
- Pupils understand the expectations for behaviour and respond well to staff direction. They become increasingly motivated and cooperative. Pupils know that there are occasions when behaviour does not uphold the high standards expected at the school. However, they feel that any incidents are dealt with well to minimise disruption. They recognise that their behaviour should not get in anyone else's way.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is typically good. Behaviour is handled extremely well to minimise disruption to learning and support pupils to re-engage.
- Pupils' conduct around the school is good. Pupils enjoy social times and get on well. Pupils have pride in their school and their achievements. They are increasingly productive and put effort into their written work. They look after their books and the school's resources with care.
- Attendance is a constant challenge; it was 56% during the last school year. The low attendance is due mainly to the arrangements to support pupils back into full-time education. Pupils are registered at MSPRU and allocated a full-time place at the school. However, many pupils attend part time when they start because they are unable to manage a full-time timetable. Centre managers ensure that registers are kept every day. Any absence is logged accurately and followed up, ensuring that pupils' whereabouts are known. Pupils' attendance improves as they settle into school.
- Pupils are excluded for a fixed term as a last resort. Exclusion increased and was high when the new behaviour policy was introduced last year. Exclusions have reduced this term compared with the same period last year.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress from their various starting points, in the short period of time they are at the school. Gaps in pupils' learning are addressed effectively. As gaps in their knowledge are resolved, pupils develop their skills and are able to re-engage with learning in a range of subjects.
- Since the start of the school year, pupils have been productive across the curriculum. They have improved their writing skills significantly. Their work shows a good grasp of features of different types of writing. Pupils make good progress in mathematics because mathematical knowledge and skills are taught effectively.
- Pupils who are at the school for a sufficient period of time to complete courses gain a number of useful qualifications relevant to their ability and aspirations. Pupils who complete Year 11 at the school gain at least entry level 3 functional skills qualifications in English, mathematics and science. They also gain unit awards in personal skills, computing, multimedia, performing arts and sports. Pupils who are able to can take up to four GCSEs, in English, mathematics, science and art. Success rates are good.
- For some pupils, their limited vocabulary and reading and comprehension skills are a barrier to learning. Those who have a very low reading age make very good progress in their reading skills, following precision teaching. However, the progress of pupils who do not receive specific support is not as strong. Pupils' development of their vocabulary is patchy across subjects.
- Pupils' growing personal skills, good-quality careers advice and good progress in their learning equip them well for their next steps. In 2018, 22 of the 25 leavers went into further education, accessing a range of vocational courses. Pupils have a good idea of what they would like to do, what is within their capability and how they can achieve their goals.

School details

Unique reference number	137887
DfE registration number	352/6006
Inspection number	10053734

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	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	59
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Andrew Portersmith
Chair	Jeff Mills
Headteacher	Matthew McCann
Annual fees (day pupils)	£13,500
Telephone number	0161 223 8700
Website	www.musicstuffeducation.org
Email address	musicstuff@musicstuffeducation.org
Date of previous inspection	18–20 October 2016

Information about this school

- Music Stuff is an alternative education provider that specialises in educating disengaged young people throughout Greater Manchester. All pupils are registered with and referred from the Manchester Secondary Pupil Referral Unit.
- The school is registered for up to 70 pupils aged 11 to 16. Currently, there are 59 pupils on roll, aged 13 to 16.
- The school is registered to operate out of four sites, located in Openshaw, Clayton, Levenshulme and Burnage. The Clayton and Burnage sites provide education for pupils in Year 10 and Year 11. The Openshaw and the Levenshulme sites provide education for

pupils in Year 9. All sites have been refurbished since the last inspection.

- The school provides for pupils who have been or are at risk of being excluded from mainstream education. Almost all pupils have missed long periods of time from school. Many pupils have been to several alternative providers prior to being placed at the school.
- Pupils are admitted at any time during the year. Their length of stay varies from a few weeks to two years. Cohorts are changeable due to the short period of time pupils are on roll.
- Every pupil has special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and 10 pupils currently on roll have an education, health and care plan. In addition, a number of pupils have a child protection plan, a child in need plan, access to early help or are in the care of the local authority.
- The school delivers education in functional skills in English and mathematics, entry level science, four GCSE subjects, unit awards in multimedia and performing arts, and courses in IT and sports.
- The last standard inspection was in October 2016. At that inspection, overall effectiveness was judged to be inadequate. There were unmet independent school standards.
- An evaluation of the school's action plan in March 2017 judged the proposed action plan to be acceptable with modifications.
- A progress monitoring visit in October 2017 judged the unmet standards identified at the standard inspection and checked during the progress monitoring inspection to be met.
- The headteacher took up post just before the last standard inspection. A number of teaching staff have been appointed since that inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning and scrutinised pupils' written work at each site.
- Inspectors met with leaders, governors and staff. They spoke by telephone with leaders from Manchester Secondary Pupil Referral Unit, which commissions services from the provision.
- They spoke with pupils to gain their views on the work of the school.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including action planning, self-evaluation, monitoring of teaching and performance management, pupils' progress tracking, safeguarding procedures, health and safety checks, and risk assessments. School policies were seen.
- There were no responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Parents' views documented in the school's surveys and through inspectors' discussions with parents were taken into account. Inspectors also took into account 10 responses to the confidential staff questionnaire.
- An inspector examined the premises at the school's four sites.

Inspection team

Jean Olsson-Law, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector

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