

School inspection report

4 to 6 November 2025

Centre Academy London

92 St John's Hill

Battersea

London

SW11 1SH

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. The proprietor and leaders ensure that the school meets all of the Standards. Leaders monitor the effectiveness of the school's programmes and provision in a sophisticated and thorough manner, ensuring that pupils have effective opportunities to develop the skills they need to succeed in their lives after school.
2. Leaders understand the additional risks that pupils who have complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) might face, whether through their own actions or from society more generally, and mitigate these effectively. The school meets its duties under the Equality Act 2010 well.
3. Leaders' provision of well-considered and tailored training for staff, combined with rigorous and supportive monitoring and target setting, ensures that teaching is typically well matched to the learning needs of pupils. Teachers and staff put the individual needs of pupils at the centre of their work by understanding the nature of their pupils and their needs. A range of speech, language and occupational therapists work alongside teaching staff to ensure that pupils' communication and sensory processing difficulties are addressed.
4. Subject leaders plan schemes of work carefully to suit the needs of the pupils and senior leaders ensure that there is a sharing of effective practice across departments. Teaching is characterised by thorough planning, secure subject knowledge, high expectations, rigorous tracking, effective questioning and efficient use of assessment to support learning. Staff employ a wide range of approaches to successfully challenge and elicit responses from pupils. The focus on developing pupils' skills in communication and numeracy has a positive impact on their achievement across all areas of their learning.
5. The school ensures that pupils can take individualised qualifications at GCSE, BTEC or in functional skills that meet pupils' interests and capabilities. Teaching is pitched at an appropriate level to suit the needs of the pupils and is challenging enough to ensure that pupils with higher prior attainment are being adequately stretched. Consequently, pupils follow pathways appropriate to their learning needs, and in Year 11 and the sixth form, are able to achieve accreditation in English and mathematics, as well as in independence and life skills.
6. Leaders and staff maintain a thorough knowledge of their pupils and their behaviours and needs. They provide appropriate support at the opportune time to prepare pupils well for adulthood. Pupils' personal risk and behaviour plans are comprehensive. These consider how to manage potential risks, including, when applicable, self-harm and dysregulation. Staff are skilled at refocusing pupils when they struggle to regulate their behaviour and need to take a break from their learning. This may involve taking movement breaks outside of class.
7. Many pupils prefer to work independently during lessons and in clubs, rather than working together as a group to achieve a common goal. The limited opportunities for pupils to work together collaboratively do not develop their social, interpersonal and teamwork skills as effectively as possible.
8. Leaders take particular care over combatting absence from school, as a key driver in the school's ethos is to ensure better attendance from pupils, many of whom have previously been poor school

attenders. Leaders emphasise that increasing attendance enables more opportunities for more successful learning, so that pupils understand this.

9. Older pupils follow an accredited programme and a personalised curriculum designed to teach them the skills they need for their future. Effective teaching encourages pupils to develop essential independent life skills, such as buying and preparing their own meals. Pupils benefit from work experience which is tailored to meet individual needs and aspirations.
10. The school implements effective procedures for safeguarding. These meet government guidelines and include thorough safer recruitment checks on adults, as well as a carefully planned approach to managing the safety and protection of pupils.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- develop pupils' social and interpersonal skills and ability to work collaboratively with each other more effectively.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Effective leadership and management are present at all levels. Staff share the recently appointed senior leadership team's determination to improve pupils' achievement, many of whom have had difficulty managing their behaviour in the past. Staff are passionate about enabling pupils to unlock their potential. This aligns with the school's ethos of providing individualised support to meet pupils' needs, encouraging attendance and progress. These, alongside pupils' needs, are regularly reviewed in daily briefings and weekly staff meetings.
12. Leaders systematically check the quality of teaching and learning. They understand what is working well and where further improvements can be made. Leaders take effective action to maximise the impact of teaching and therapies. High-quality staff training and close monitoring of pupils' progress enable staff to provide targeted support to pupils who struggle academically, socially, and behaviourally.
13. Leaders of learning support summarise each pupil's education, health and care plan (EHC plan) as a provision map for staff to use in their planning and lessons. These are used to monitor pupil progress, particularly against established baselines, and are regularly updated. Teachers are well supported by leaders through rigorous performance management procedures, with the work of individuals closely monitored. As a result, a highly skilled and enthusiastic workforce is in place. Staff, regardless of their role, are passionate about sharing ideas and discussing what works for specific individual pupils, benefiting their personal development and achievement.
14. The promotion of equal opportunities is well embedded in all aspects of the school's work. A suitable and regularly reviewed accessibility plan is in place. Discrimination of any sort is not tolerated. The school meets its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.
15. Risk management is effective. Risk assessments identify and mitigate against particular risks that individual pupils who have complex SEND and experience anxiety can face. The school is situated on a busy high street, and the risk assessments for trips, which cover how to navigate urban environments and travel on public transport, help pupils understand the dangers of the local area. Each pupil has a personalised risk and safety plan that includes how the pupil's social, emotional, and mental health needs are addressed. These also identify individual pupils' needs, which in turn determine the appropriate adjustments to school policies and their application.
16. Leaders work well with external agencies. Their work with local government professionals linked to safeguarding is open and reflective. Leaders collaborate with a large number of multi-agency partnerships, depending on the concerns being addressed. The school also collaborates with external agencies, such as a local employment agency and community trust, to ensure the fulfilment of its aim that all pupils will find employment if they are not pursuing further education.
17. The school provides parents with all required information, such as regular reports, which they send out termly, and copies of school policies through its website. The school provides the local authorities who place pupils at the school with the required information relating to the use of funds for pupils who have EHC plans.
18. There is a suitable three-stage complaints procedure for both informal and formal complaints, along with appropriate timescales. The policy is implemented effectively, including the organisation of

panels for any stage three complaints. Suitable records are kept, clearly detailing the stage a complaint reaches and including any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

19. Governors maintain effective oversight of the school, so that they have a clear understanding of the school's effectiveness and next steps for development. The governing board takes well-considered action when necessary and holds leaders rigorously accountable for the school's performance. Governors remain well informed about the quality of teaching through visits and discussions with leaders and staff. They receive reports from pastoral and academic leaders and ask probing questions to ensure they fully understand the school, particularly with regard to pupils' progress. They ensure that leaders possess the necessary knowledge and skills to undertake their roles effectively. As a result, the school actively promotes pupils' wellbeing effectively and meets all of the Standards.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

20. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. Leaders implement a curriculum that is relevant and responsive to individuals' needs. For example, the curriculum is designed to enable pupils to learn the coping skills necessary to manage their anxieties and other challenges that their learning difficulties constantly pose. These include learning how to concentrate and organise their time productively
22. Pupils benefit from teachers' effective grouping strategies and the personal attention they receive from staff with expertise in supporting pupils who have SEND.
23. Form tutors act as mentors to the pupils and apply their understanding that what works for one pupil may not work for another. At the start of each day, tutors assess each pupil's readiness for learning and communicate this to subject staff. Timetables for individual groups of pupils are well suited to their ages and abilities. Supported by their teachers and tutors, pupils begin to realise their abilities and skills after a short time in school. They do so because of the programmes available to them that help develop their academic, vocational, artistic and creative skills and understanding. Pupils learn that if they act responsibly and apply themselves, then their learning is likely to develop well.
24. Teachers ensure that pupils practise speaking, reading and writing skills at suitable levels. Other professionals, such as speech therapists and occupational therapists, also play a key part in developing these skills, working in partnership with teachers to assess pupils and to devise challenging targets for them. Teachers' expertise in techniques to support pupils who experience anxieties or who have a diagnosis of autism enables them to provide effective support for pupils' communication and behavioural needs.
25. Staff throughout the school successfully engage reluctant readers, helping them develop a love for reading by using a 'Drop Everything and Read' (DEAR) approach. For example, staff use texts such as *Frankenstein* for younger pupils and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* for those studying GCSE. Such texts prompt pupils to think critically and reflect on characters and how the writers present them in particular ways.
26. Younger pupils or new arrivals to the school exhibit a wide range of mathematical capability depending on pupils' prior school attendance history and mathematical background when they join. Work is matched appropriately to their starting points. Much of the mathematics taught at the school relates to real-life situations. Teachers enable pupils to employ appropriate logical methods, reasoning and problem-solving techniques. Pupils increasingly acquire and use mathematical language and terms accurately. Pupils with higher prior attainment learn to manipulate numbers confidently and use algebraic manipulation accurately. Similarly, science connects pupils with everyday life examples, such as the reflux of stomach acid and how to neutralise it. Lessons include appropriate practical work and experiments to enhance pupil involvement and critical thinking. Scientific technical language is used consistently, with staff making its meaning clear through effective explanations and the use of resources such as visual aids.
27. Leaders implement comprehensive and effective systems and processes for assessing pupils' needs and progress and providing them with appropriate support. Specialist staff and therapists help staff use well-chosen strategies to help pupils learn routines well. From typically low starting points, one in five pupils achieve GCSE grades 7 to 9 across a range of subjects, including English and

mathematics. Functional skills level 1 is achieved by a third of pupils in English and two-thirds in mathematics. The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) learn successfully due to individualised support and resources that enable them to access the curriculum and develop their fluency in speaking, reading and writing.

28. Teachers and well-briefed classroom support staff provide high levels of individual tuition and support where necessary, ensuring that each pupil learns confidently and successfully. Pupils receive purposeful oral feedback on their work. This helps them understand how to improve their work in the next small step. Teachers maintain regular contact with parents, often on a daily basis. This working partnership ensures that parents are regularly well informed about their child's progress.
29. Clubs provide recreational opportunities for technological, aesthetic, and creative extension work. These include sessions on developing websites, using subtitles and photography. Such activities enable pupils to develop their interests and skills in a supportive environment.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

30. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

31. Staff utilise well-judged strategies, including their use of body language to manage heightened anxieties that affect pupils. When pupils need space to regulate their emotions, their exits and re-entries to classrooms are handled well. The way in which staff use such calming strategies enables learning to continue without undue disruption. Mentors are aware of the problems or difficulties each individual pupil may experience from time to time and act effectively as trusted advisors. The school successfully attends to the emotional needs of its pupils in any situation, supported by the trusting and respectful working relationships that staff develop with pupils.
32. Pupils' personal development is well supported by a bespoke personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme. This includes age-appropriate education on relationships, sex and health. Emotional learning support activities enable pupils to use relevant vocabulary to articulate their ideas about maintaining healthy relationships. Pupils become able to identify their best attributes in relationships and what they might need to do to improve in less successful situations. Specific and very focused pieces of work to support individual pupils are common. These might be to help their understanding of the complexities of consent or appropriate and inappropriate touch. Teachers enable focused learning and ensure that pupils are polite, attentive and respectful to the staff and other pupils.
33. Pupils' relationships with their teachers and with each other are respectful, open, friendly and co-operative. They are comfortable engaging in class-based activities. Suitable counselling and medical facilities provide pupils with private and secure spaces to express any concerns. Pupils also have access to an online mental health forum for young people.
34. All pupils participate in physical education (PE) once a week, including visits to local sports and boxing centres. Leaders keep the PE provision varied so that there is always something to hold the pupils' interest. Pupils learn sports-specific skills, such as how to bowl and throw a ball accurately in cricket.
35. Leaders and staff utilise artistic activities to enhance pupils' social and emotional wellbeing. Engaging in these activities helps individual pupils to communicate and process their emotions effectively in a range of ways. Art lessons provide a therapeutic and non-judgmental space for pupils to express their experiences and feelings, including spiritual reflections, thereby facilitating emotional resilience. Pupils make progress in their aesthetic and creative work due to encouraging and positive teaching which helps develop their self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities.
36. Cooking sessions are popular. In these, pupils work together, learn how to prepare and cook meals and enjoy eating the fruits of their labour. However, such opportunities for pupils to work together are rare. Many pupils often prefer to work independently of others in lessons and clubs, especially when supported individually by adults. The limited opportunities for pupils to work together collaboratively do not enable pupils to develop their social, interpersonal and teamwork skills as much as possible.
37. Leaders have developed the management and analysis of behaviour patterns. This has helped staff provide the right level of support for pupils. Staff are aware of the individual factors that can quickly affect each pupil's behaviour. They employ strategies effectively to ensure that any incident is dealt

with calmly and swiftly. Discipline and behaviour are generally acceptable with a few exceptions. The pupils understand the behaviour policy, and leaders and staff apply it fairly and proportionately. Leaders analyse the rigorous records of behaviour incidents in order to improve behaviour when required. Bullying at the school is rare and not tolerated. Leaders make effective use of a mentoring programme and conversations designed to help pupils affected by bullying incidents to resolve any conflicts and avoid bullying in the future.

38. The premises are maintained suitably through a methodical programme of checks and servicing of equipment. Appropriate fire signage and regular fire evacuation drills are in place. Well-organised supervision of all areas of the school ensures pupils are suitably supported at all times. First aid and medication are stored and secured in a manner that ensures easy access when required. Appropriately trained staff follow suitable procedures for administering medication or providing first aid when required.

39. Admission and attendance registers are maintained in line with current statutory guidance. Staff use transition plans to motivate pupils about the individual learning pathways provided for them. This results in increased attendance rates among pupils, with improvements soon after their arrival at the school. Leaders carefully track attendance and follow up on any absences promptly with parents. Leaders inform the local authority of any pupils who leave or join the school at non-standard transition points.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

40. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

41. Leaders successfully help pupils to understand that all people should be respected and treated equally, regardless of their personal characteristics, such as race and religion. Respect for all individuals is woven into subjects across the curriculum, reflecting the school's philosophy that all people have equal value and that their identities should be respected. Pupils democratically participate in decision-making about their learning environment, classroom rules, and education.
42. Pupils feel valued and are confident to try new things because the staff who work with them gain their trust. Lessons enable pupils to have a clearer understanding of equality, different cultures and beliefs. Pupils become increasingly aware of the importance of accepting individuality. They learn about Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism and Hinduism. Pupil-produced displays in the school show their secure understanding of world religions and different cultures.
43. The promotion of values, such as trust and fairness, including British values of respect, individual liberty and tolerance, is embedded in PSHE schemes of work. Pupils actively learn these values and how they can contribute to the development of their resilience and emotional wellbeing. There are no recorded incidents of racist behaviour or derogatory comments about disability. An ethos of tolerance and positive support for others pervades the school.
44. The school develops pupils' sense of responsibility towards others. Leaders support the pupil council well. The pupil council is a forum that enables both school-focused decision-making and further community support, allowing pupils to express opinions on how to improve their school and which charities to support. Pupils have recently raised £200 for a local London charity that provides clothes, toys and equipment for babies and young children.
45. The school enables pupils to develop their understanding of right and wrong. Class discussions typically refer to agreed-upon class rules when they are infringed, the need to treat each other fairly and the importance of being honest and taking responsibility for one's own actions.
46. The school develops pupils' economic awareness effectively. Younger pupils play board games where they practise skills such as counting money and numbers on dice, as well as considering, for example, the monetary values of properties represented on cards. 'Life skills' lessons for older pupils include sensible shopping, budgeting, loans, debt management and the dangers of irresponsible gambling, bringing real-life situations to the attention of pupils.
47. Leaders ensure that pupils are fully supported in exploring job options and in matching pupil skills to work experience. The school are always looking for new placements for pupils. Staff invite in outside speakers who hold a range of jobs to provide inspiration and information to the pupils. 'Path to employment' sessions provide pupils with the opportunity to explore various career options, and they then receive a personalised information pack that they can take to an employer. Leaders work very closely with parents and providers to ensure that pupils are placed in the most appropriate provision when they leave the school. In recent years, no pupil has left without a qualification and all pupils enter training, further education or employment.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

48. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

49. The school's safeguarding arrangements and culture are effective. Leaders ensure that consideration of safeguarding is an integral part of everyday life. Governors are suitably trained in safeguarding and maintaining effective oversight of the school's safeguarding policy and procedures to ensure that these are in line with the current statutory guidance requirements.
50. Staff have appropriate and regular safeguarding training, beginning when they first join the school. Staff understand the additional risks that vulnerable pupils could face, including the dangers of child-on-child abuse, bullying, including misogyny, and prejudice. Staff understand how to report any safeguarding concerns that might arise, including those relating to the conduct of adults working with pupils. They are confident to share information when they have any worry that something might be a concern.
51. The safeguarding team is well trained. They take timely action when concerns arise, including those that require the involvement of external agencies, such as children's services and local authority social and mental health services. The safeguarding team keeps suitable and clear records of any safeguarding concerns, including those linked to the complex behaviour of pupils, and of how the school has responded to these.
52. The school carries out all required safer recruitment checks on adults before they commence working at the school. These checks are recorded accurately in a suitable single central record of appointments (SCR).
53. Staff teach pupils how to stay safe, especially as they prepare for work experience and periods of vocational training outside school. Pupils are confident that there is someone they can talk to if they have worries. Pupils are protected from online dangers by suitable online filtering and monitoring systems that are regularly checked and updated annually.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

54. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Centre Academy London
Department for Education number	212/6408
Registered charity number	311263
Address	Centre Academy London 92 St John's Hill Battersea London SW11 1SH
Phone number	020 7738 2344
Email address	londonschool@centreacademy.co.uk
Website	www.centreacademy.net
Proprietor	Mr Rohan Murphy
Chair	Mr Rohan Murphy
Headteacher	Mr Michael Jeffrey
Age range	11 to 19
Number of pupils	46
Date of previous inspection	22 to 24 November 2022

Information about the school

55. Centre Academy London is an independent, co-educational day school for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs. The school opened in Battersea, London in 1983. The school is owned by the proprietor, who chairs an advisory board of governors. The current headteacher took up his post in January 2025.
56. All pupils in the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
57. The school has identified a very small proportion of pupils as speaking English as an additional language (EAL).
58. The school states its aims are to take pupils with a diagnosis of autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety, trauma, emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA), and in a calm and peaceful environment, develop their emotional and academic needs, so when a pupil leaves, he or she will have qualifications, have completed work experience, grown in confidence and self-esteem, so to progress to either an apprenticeship, a job or further education.

Inspection details

Inspection dates	4 to 6 November 2025
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59. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

60. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

61. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit www.isi.net.

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