

CACFO Education Centre

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number	306/6094
Unique Reference Number (URN)	132776
Inspection number	348791
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Greg Sorrell

Published:

Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A¹ of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

The proprietor is the Croydon African Caribbean Family Organisation (CACFO) which is a registered charity that operates an Education Centre registered as an independent school. It was founded in 1997 and shares its campus with the CACFO community centre in Thornton Heath. It operates as a pupil referral unit for up to 20 students and provides full-time education on a short-stay basis for students who have experienced significant difficulties in accessing mainstream education. These are typically students who have been permanently excluded from school who are seeking reintegration into mainstream or special schools, students at risk of permanent exclusion and students serving fixed-term exclusions. The length of stay for students ranges from five days to up to two terms.

At the time of inspection there were six boys and three girls on roll, some of whom were dual-registered with their own schools. The centre admits students from several local authorities although the main referring local authority is the London Borough of Croydon which purchases up to 10 places annually through a service level agreement.

The school has explicit aims to 'encourage academic success and social advancement of children, particularly, but not exclusively, of African and African Caribbean descent'. The centre was last inspected in October 2007.

Evaluation of the school

The CACFO Education Centre meets its aims effectively. It provides a good quality of education for its students who make good progress because the quality of the curriculum, teaching and assessment is good. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their behaviour are good. The provision for the welfare, health and safety of students is good; safeguarding arrangements are thorough and meet requirements. It has made good progress since its last inspection. The school meets all but one of the regulations for independent school registration.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

Quality of education

The quality of education is good. The curriculum is good and it is supported by appropriate policies and schemes of work drawn from the National Curriculum and other guidance relevant to the students' needs. The curriculum also provides well for the students' social, emotional and behavioural needs.

The timetable offers sufficient breadth to enable the students to maintain their studies in the majority of subjects they would access in mainstream schools. In addition to English, mathematics and science, the students also study information and communication technology (ICT), art, physical education and drama. Limitations in the centre's accommodation reduce opportunities for scientific experiments although good use is made of computer simulations. The centre's plans for accredited courses and vocational programmes are still at an early stage, although where appropriate the students may sit examinations at other local provision.

There is a highly relevant programme for personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE). Suitable arrangements are made with the Connexions service to provide a programme of careers, education and guidance. Other personalised programmes include additional literacy, numeracy, counselling and coaching sessions that are effective in improving the students' basic skills, attitudes and behaviour. There are currently no extra-curricular activities or other opportunities for the students to express a choice of activity. In the last year, visits to the local community have been limited.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. There are many strengths evident, notably the high quality of relationships between staff and students. The staff have good knowledge in relation to the subjects they teach and relevant experience in relation to the students' behavioural needs. Teachers go to great lengths to make the subject matter relevant to the students' needs. For example, in English, the students were encouraged to read poetry aloud and so develop their speaking and listening skills. The teacher's high expectations ensured that all took part and successfully demonstrated increasingly good understanding of literary devices such as personification, onomatopoeia and alliteration. Within a science lesson, the students developed their understanding of starting a family and were invited to give their views as to the economic circumstances required to give a child a good start in life. The staff also work very well as a team and serve as positive role models to the students in relation to their attitudes to learning and towards others. Staff expertise in counselling, coaching and relationships is also used to good effect in PSHCE. Text book resources are adequate but there is too little equipment for practical science investigation. The stock of library books and computer hardware is largely material discarded from other provision and it requires improving and updating.

The use of assessment is good. Teachers make regular assessments of students' progress based on the National Curriculum level descriptors. This use of assessment

is also informed by relevant national guidance for assessing students' work. As a result students' self-assessment skills are developing well. The staff also assess students' progress in relation to their attitudes, behaviour and readiness for re-integration.

The students make good progress overall. The assessment of progress starts with an entry assessment in English and mathematics. Typically, students are working at levels below average although due to the support they receive they make good progress in the subjects they study. The vast majority make sufficient progress in their behaviour to enable successful re-integration into other schools.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is good. The centre offers a calm and purposeful learning environment that is appreciated by students, as is shown by the vast majority who attend on a regular basis. Although a very small minority struggle to be on time and attend every day, attendance is good overall and this represents a significant improvement for some students. Alternative programmes are devised to re-engage the most disaffected. The centre liaises very closely with referring local authorities to maximise the learning opportunities for all students. Although there is a highly appropriate focus on personal development, there is also a very strong emphasis on academic achievement while at the centre. This assists the students' economic well-being and prepares them well for their next stage.

Staff work hard to give the students a belief that they can achieve. The students know and respond well to the centre's systems for rewards and sanctions. Behaviour is good. The students are encouraged to develop strategies to improve their behaviour and are also invited to discuss their peers' behaviour and offer constructive comments as to how further improvements may be achieved.

The students have a balanced view of their time at the centre while wishing to be back in school. One student commented, 'I've learned that it's easy to be thrown out of a mainstream school and that it's really hard to get back.' The students develop an increased understanding of their impact upon others. Another added, 'I've learned to be more respectful to adults and I hope to work better when I return to school.'

Students contribute well to the work of the CACFO charity by assisting with lunch for community elders and fundraising. The students expressed legitimate views that they have few visits to places of interest or opportunities for choice, such as subject options. They also wish to resume their council meetings. The students develop a good awareness of their own cultural heritage and that of others. They become aware of the functions of public institutions, including local government. PSHCE lessons on stereotyping and anti-racism help to ensure racial harmony.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of the students is good. Students say that they feel safe in school, that bullying is not a problem and that staff help them to talk through and address any issues that arise. There is good provision for the students' emotional well-being through regular counselling from centre staff. The work with the educational welfare service and other agencies has improved since the last inspection. The students are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles and have regular opportunities for vigorous physical exercise. They receive relevant guidance in relation to staying safe. All of the required policies are in place and are informed by the most recent guidance and are subject to timely review by governors. All safeguarding requirements are met. The policy for child protection and the training of the designated person and staff are up to date. Risk assessments of the students and their activities are undertaken thoroughly. Regular attention is given to fire safety and good records are kept of fire drills, accidents and incidents. Admission and attendance registers are maintained appropriately. In order to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, the school has planned well to increase accessibility.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Procedures for confirming the suitability of the proprietor and staff meet the regulations for safeguarding children and include the maintenance of a single central register of the recruitment checks undertaken.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises offer satisfactory accommodation for safe and effective learning. The single storey building on the CACFO campus provides one classroom that may be divided into two as required. There are adequate washroom facilities and a very well equipped room should students become ill during the school day. Space is at a premium, although staff make best use of the limited facilities for administration, storage and display. The on-site play facilities are very limited although good use is made of a nearby park and a local gymnasium for physical education.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information for parents, carers and others meets requirements. Through its prospectus and other documentation the centre makes parents, prospective parents and other interested parties aware that all its policies are available on request. Parents are also provided with a copy of its safeguarding policy. There are good links between the centre and parents, schools and local authorities through visits, meetings and written reports.

Three pre-inspection questionnaires were received from parents that indicated complete satisfaction with the work of the centre. No local authority responses were received. However, recent monitoring reports by one local authority expressed very positive views about the centre's work, viewing it as an important partner in their overall provision.

Procedures for handling complaints

The complaints policy and procedures meet the requirements. The centre has received no complaints in the last year.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- provide classroom resources of an adequate quality, quantity and range and ensure they are used effectively (paragraph 1(3)(f)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- provide vocational programmes and further accredited courses, particularly for older students
- provide the students with some choice in the studies they follow
- resume meetings whereby the students can formally express their views
- increase the frequency of visits to the wider community.

³ www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.htm

Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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The quality of boarding provision

Evaluation of boarding provision				
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School details

Name of school	CACFO Education Centre		
DCSF number	306/6094		
Unique reference number (URN)	132776		
Type of school	Secondary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1997		
Age range of pupils	11–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 6	Girls: 3	Total: 9
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees	£9,600 and £75 per day for students not resident in Croydon		
Address of school	40 Northwood Road Thornton Heath Surrey CR7 8HQ		
Telephone number	020 8771 6222		
Fax number	020 8771 9700		
Email address	headteacher@cacfo.org.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Philip Gardiner		
Proprietor	CACFO		
Reporting inspector	Greg Sorrell		
Dates of inspection	19–20 May 2010		