

CACFO Education Centre

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	306/6094
Unique Reference Number	132776
Inspection number	316922
Inspection dates	10-11 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Neville Grenyer AI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order 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

CACFO Education Centre is an independent school founded in 1995 and run as part of the Croydon African Caribbean Family Organisation (CACFO) with which it shares its campus in Thornton Heath. It provides full time education for four main groups of pupils, many of whom are vulnerable children. These include pupils who have been permanently excluded from school seeking reintegration into mainstream schools, pupils having difficulty in mainstream schools, pupils newly resident in Croydon and "looked after pupils" who need emergency short term placements. The school has explicit aims and is asked by the CACFO charity to contribute towards encouraging academic success and social advancement of children, particularly boys, of Caribbean descent. At the time of this inspection, early in the autumn term, the pupils present include two who did not successfully manage to re-integrate back into the mainstream last term.

Evaluation of the school

CACFO Education Centre is a good independent school which achieves its aims for most of the pupils, for whom it provides a vital life line. This school is very much part of its community. It successfully delivers a balanced but reduced curriculum, through good teaching that is well planned and well delivered by a skilful staff. Its pupils make good progress in the short time that most attend the school and the school provides well, often through their Afro-Caribbean culture, to encourage and help their spiritual, moral, social development. It addresses the welfare of its pupils well, and promotes their health and safety both in and out of school.

Quality of education

The school's curriculum is good. It is balanced and well suited to the children's needs. The curriculum policy outlines the CACFO Education Centre curriculum, which is informed by the London Borough of Croydon's curriculum for Pupil Referral Units. Its over-riding aim is *"to provide as broad and balanced a curriculum for its pupils as possible, and one which benefits all the children and young people who attend the Centre."* The core subjects of English, mathematics, science, information communication technology (ICT), physical education (PE), drama, citizenship and art are augmented with personal, social and health education (PHSE) and, at Key Stage 4, some vocational and pre-vocational education. When pupils arrive at the Centre,

having been excluded for a second or subsequent time, or where they are excluded very late in their school career, their curriculum is initially flexible. Each pupil has a designed individual education plan (IEP) with targets, either for learning or behaviour. When the pupils are at the end of their school career, the school seeks to maximise the re-integration opportunities, to prepare the pupil for Post-16 training or a job, with courses in skills for life, inter-personal skills and confidence building.

The teaching seen was all good. Teaching is well planned and delivered by teachers with appropriate expertise and infectious enthusiasm: as a result, in the lessons, pupils develop new enthusiasm. One teacher illustrating a mathematical method said "isn't that beautiful?" and the pupil agreed that really it was. In another lesson, a pupil had, voluntarily and unprompted, learnt off by heart a poem by Benjamin Zephaniah studied in one lesson, so that he could repeat it the next day. Pupils enjoyed reading poems in the original patois and thus linking to their Afro-Caribbean heritage with some pride. In all lessons pupils were seen at times to enjoy their learning; even at times when their own personal lives are in some turmoil, they find the stability of the classroom a vital relief. They very much enjoyed making healthy eating choices in a PSHE lesson. The children are very well known to the teachers, and mostly taught in small groups so that unobtrusive assessment and effective planning for individual needs is easily managed.

Assessment systems in the school are good. On arrival, pupils are given a thorough National Curriculum baseline assessment. They are also given a reading age test, together with comprehension and spelling age tests. At this stage, pupils' levels of achievement are rather varied, but usually below national norms for their chronological age. Often poor behaviour and other factors have held back these pupils' progress academically. Data from the baseline tests show this clearly and the progress that pupils have made during their career at this school.

Pupils not only receive their National Curriculum levels so that they know how well they are achieving, they are set curricular and behavioural targets each term so that they know what to do to improve their work. Pupils' reports show grades awarded for classroom effort, homework effort and National Curriculum grades in English, mathematics, science, ICT, art, Drama, citizenship and PE alongside an explanation of the grade's criteria. Pupils have made good progress over their stay in the school, but often from a low initial baseline level. Progress in class was however evident in the case of each pupil seen.

Re-integration reports are very detailed and provide a sound basis for the pupils' IEPs at their next school, covering concerns, incidents as the basis for original referral, the nature of the school's intervention, and baseline and any subsequent assessment in English, mathematics and science. The report also records attendance levels throughout, pupils' conduct and behaviour, and recommendations on the basis of tests for learning difficulties, behaviour management, and support needs.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It helps pupils to develop their self knowledge, self esteem and self confidence in a number of ways. The school counsellor attends twice a week and is available on call at other times. Much of his work is aimed at enabling pupils to make moral decisions. PHSE lessons also contain many opportunities to help pupils in this respect, and to avoid risky behaviour. Overall behaviour is satisfactory.

Pupils were seen to enjoy work in class in a number of lessons: they enjoyed reading poetry celebrating the traditional patois and the Afro-Caribbean cultural history, they enjoyed making genuine healthy choices in PHSE and they clearly found satisfaction when making progress in their mathematics lessons; one pupil was overheard exclaiming to herself as the penny dropped: "Is that how you do it!". The school has relatively good attendance when looked at across the borough. A small minority struggle due to circumstances beyond the control of the school. Where appropriate data is completed by previous schools, there is evidence of a marked drop in the range and intensity of negative behaviours. Slow progress by a few, combined with slow reintegration into the mainstream, has in the past affected attendance and behaviour.

Most of the 29 students from last year are positive in their assessment of the school. Those who have benefited from counselling provided on site wish that it could be available all the time, as evidenced in records of review meetings, and in pupils' "thank you" cards. The school as yet has no organised system, such as a questionnaire, to systematically interrogate the views of parents and pupils in particular. The current roll contains the three pupils who were not reintegrated into mainstream education because of continued disaffection, and so there is a higher proportion than would usually be found not enjoying their education, although even these during lessons observed and in conversations demonstrated that they were enjoying the activities.

The school follows good practice in pastoral support, correct protocols for managed moves; it successfully implements managed behaviour agreements and at times, where appropriate, parental contracts. Pupils have run stalls for fund raising for local charities; they distributed leaflets on community activities. The main CACFO charity carefully manages the involvement of some pupils in partnering programmes with elderly clients, increasing empathy and understanding across the age gap.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school makes good provision for its pupils' welfare, health and safety. It encourages pupils to be healthy very effectively and well. The school uses the National Children's Bureau (NCB) life skills including a healthy eating and exercise diary. Both the science and PHSE courses are also well adjusted for the role, as seen in a lesson on nutrition which illustrated this in effective action and that some of

these pupils are very well informed in terms of nutrition. There is an effective Afro-Caribbean Healthy meals policy at CACFO and the luncheons during the inspection involved a spicy cow foot soup, peas and rice, and Caribbean-style chicken.

The school ensures that pupils stay safe through a number of strategies and applied policies. The NCB Life Skills material includes a course in risk assessment for pupils to use in relation to risky behaviour or risky environments; this included a very good "Agony-Aunt or -Uncle!" role playing exercise. The school has a clear anti-bullying policy, supported by a statement of intent, clear definitions, clear sets of objectives in relation to bullying with a good list of signs and symptoms. The school has set out clear procedures to be followed and records of outcomes using tried and tested, effective "Kidscape" methods. The school has good and useful records of incidents and behaviour and has a hard backed book to record sanctions imposed on pupils for disciplinary offences.

PHSE includes much of this support work using "Life Routes". The last LEA inspection recommended as a point for action, continuing to work with the Education Welfare Service to support attendance and this is at its early stages as yet. The school and its charity CACFO can address the problems of the sometimes dysfunctional families that pupils come from as well as those of the pupils, providing links with the local community, with male role models and the older generation that their own family may lack. The school has a good health and safety policy; an annual report on Health and Safety is due. Good fire safety records are held by the centre; the school holds its own separate fire drill record and evaluation book in line with the regulatory requirement. The premises are specifically designed with disabled access in mind; the school's DDA plan forms part of the CACFO development plan.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has a good and effective teaching staff with a broad and appropriate range of qualifications and expertise. They are ably assisted by well qualified classroom assistants and volunteers. The school has completed a single central record in line with recent new regulatory requirements showing that all the necessary checks have been conducted on all staff and volunteers.

School's premises and accommodation

The school has satisfactory accommodation in single storey buildings on the CACFO campus. There are two classrooms, a very small office with limited space for secure storage of records, new lavatories and a well equipped sickbay with its own facilities. There is a small play area outside, but the pupils are taken to a nearby park on good days and they use local sporting facilities for physical education.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school has a good prospectus which provides the essential information in line with regulatory requirements. Parents and carers are asked to visit the school quite frequently and were seen to make their own visits at other times. There is a good system for reports. The school has currently no systematic ways of obtaining feedback from parents and the Ofsted questionnaires were seen to be very useful in this respect. Very few parents or pupils completed the questionnaires. Comments from the LEA were very positive and supportive; considering the nature of the school and the circumstances of its clientele, there was a reasonable balance of positive and negative parental and pupil comments.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's arrangements for handling informal and formal complaints meet all of the requirements. The school has not received any formal written complaints in the last year

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

What the school could do to improve further

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

- explore ways of finding sufficient funding and a career structure to retain its high quality staff
- continue to work with the Educational Welfare Service to further improve attendance
- seek to improve recreational facilities for pupils
- work with CACFO to produce an annual health and safety report
- organise regular questionnaires for parents and carers to provide more formal evaluative feedback to the school.

School details

Name of school	CACFO Education Centre		
DCSF number	306/6094		
Unique reference number	132776		
Type of school	Secondary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1997		
Age range of pupils	11-16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 3	Girls: 2	Total: 5
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,500		
Address of school	40 Northwood Road Thornton Heath Surrey CR7 8HQ		
Telephone number	0208771 6222		
Fax number	0208771 9700		
Email address	Philipgardiner524@btinternet.com		
Headteacher	Mr Philip Gardiner		
Proprietor	CACFO		
Reporting inspector	Neville Grenyer AI		
Dates of inspection	10-11 October 2007		