

# Inspection of APTCOO - A Place to Call Our Own

Unit 15 Botany Commercial Park, Botany Avenue, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG18 5NF

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Inspection dates: 4 to 6 July 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**No**

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

Pupils are very happy at APTCOO. They are very well cared for. They feel safe. A pupil typically commented, 'We are a family and there is always someone to help us to become resilient and strong.' Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Pupils are polite and respectful. They are proud of the school.

Pupils learn to recognise when they are feeling unsettled. Staff support pupils to manage and regulate these feelings. Occasionally, pupils are unkind. They are supported to repair broken friendships. Staff have high behavioural expectations, which are met. However, leaders' expectations of learning are not as high as they should be.

Staff provide many opportunities to develop pupils' interests and talents. Pupils enjoy gardening, horse-riding and cooking. They look after the school's animals. They like the rabbits and guinea pigs and Rita, the school dog. Staff broaden pupils' experiences. They provide pupils with lasting memories, including the recent coronation afternoon tea.

Not all pupils study personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and relationships and sex education (RSE). Not all receive impartial careers advice and guidance. As a result, pupils are not as well prepared for their next steps and life in modern Britain as they could be.

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

Leaders provide pupils with a broad curriculum which is mainly delivered through topic-based learning. They ensure that pupils have opportunities to learn English and mathematics. The curriculums in these subjects are well ordered, enabling pupils to build on previous learning. Teachers reinforce aspects of literacy and mathematics in project-based learning. Older pupils, including post-16 students, gain qualifications in both subjects.

Through project-based learning, pupils are able to experience learning across a range of subjects, including aspects of science, design and technology, physical activity and creative learning. Some subjects are taught discreetly, such as art and swimming. Pupils gain a range of vocational qualifications. However, leaders have not established consistently high expectations of what pupils should know and do in their topic-based learning. They have not developed sufficiently aspirational subject curriculums that build pupils' learning over time. Staff have not identified the precise knowledge and skills that they want pupils to learn and when.

Leaders are developing a curriculum that supports pupils' reading. However, their approach to teaching pupils who are at an early stage of reading is not coherently planned. The chosen phonics scheme is not resourced well enough. There are too few opportunities to nurture pupils' love of reading.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and present subject matter clearly. They adapt their teaching to engage and keep pupils on task. They use resources well to support pupils in their learning. Staff check pupils' learning. Pupils receive support to build up their confidence and become more independent in their learning.

Staff are keen to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They use the information in pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plan) to help adapt their teaching. For example, staff break tasks down and carefully structure questions. When pupils receive specialist therapy, they thrive and begin to overcome barriers to learning. However, leaders have not ensured that there is sufficient provision of structured specialist support and therapy. Specialist assessments are not available to identify all additional needs pupils may have.

Leaders make sure that pupils are very well nurtured. Pupils become self-confident and resilient and engage with learning. As a result, they develop positive attitudes. Many pupils attend more regularly than in their previous schools. Pupils learn to adjust their behaviour, which improves over time. The school is orderly, and pupils develop good habits for learning.

Leaders are developing curriculum plans for pupils' learning in PSHE. Leaders' current approach successfully focuses on developing pupils' personal qualities. Many parts of the PSHE curriculum are taught. For example, pupils learn the importance of respect. However, leaders have not ensured that all pupils study a structured PSHE curriculum that fully promotes their personal development and their understanding of British society. For example, leaders have not ensured that all pupils learn about difference, diversity and equality. Not all pupils learn about fundamental British values, such as democracy and the rule of law. They do not learn about how the country is run. Pupils learn about the world of work, but not all receive clear and impartial careers guidance. Pupils learn about relationships and healthy living, but not all receive a breadth of RSE.

Parents and carers are positive about the school. Typically, a parent commented, 'My child is happy, always wants to attend, has started to engage with learning, has begun to make friends and wants to socialise.'

Staff are proud to be part of the school. They work well together. There is a strong sense of community focused on pupils' well-being.

The proprietor has a clear vision for the school. The school's senior leaders share this vision. However, they have not developed the school and its resources well enough as the number of pupils has increased. As a result, leaders have not maintained a high enough quality of provision as the pupil population has grown.

The proprietor has not fulfilled its duty to ensure that the school consistently meets all the independent school standards (the standards). The proprietor has failed to meet all the requirements related to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. For example, it has not developed pupils' knowledge of different cultures, the different institutions and services in England and the need to respect those who

fall under the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010. Additionally, the proprietor has failed to ensure that all pupils benefit from a PSHE curriculum, impartial careers advice and RSE. Consequently, the proprietor has not ensured that leaders consider fully pupils' well-being, where their education, contribution to society and preparation for their next steps are concerned.

The proprietor has ensured that the necessary policies and key information are readily available. For example, the school's complaints and safeguarding policies are on the school's website. Leaders comply with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The premises are well maintained. Risk assessments reflect the school's policy and enable staff to identify and mitigate against risk to keep pupils safe.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have developed a strong culture of safeguarding across all four sites. Staff know and understand their responsibilities. They are well trained. They receive regular updates and know the potential risks that pupils may face. Staff know what signs to look for. Pupils are able to share their worries. They have trusted adults they can turn to. Leaders respond appropriately when there are concerns related to pupils' welfare. They work with external agencies to provide extra support when needed. Leaders ensure that pre-employment checks are undertaken before an adult starts working with pupils.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- Leaders do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can do and achieve. Leaders have not developed sufficiently ambitious curriculums across all areas of learning that clearly identify what pupils should learn and when particularly in project-based learning. Consequently, teachers find it difficult to understand precisely how best to provide pupils with learning that is challenging and enables pupils to know, remember and do more. Pupils do not learn as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that all subject curriculums are ambitious, progressive and sequenced and that all learning is suitably challenging so that all pupils are able to achieve as well as possible.
- Leaders have not ensured that they have appropriate systems in place to identify and cater for the full range of additional needs individual pupils may have. Leaders have not made sure that there is sufficient provision of structured specialist support and therapy to meet need. Consequently, not all pupils benefit from the specialist support they may require to help them thrive and begin to overcome barriers to learning. The proprietor must ensure that leaders have the necessary expertise and resources to be able to identify and cater for all pupils' additional needs, including through the provision of specialist support.
- Leaders are beginning to prioritise reading. Pupils who are at an early stage of

reading are not fully supported with a systematic approach to becoming fluent readers. This means that some pupils do not improve their reading skills quickly enough. Leaders must ensure that those pupils who require it receive the necessary support to help them become fluent readers and develop a love of reading.

- Not all pupils study PSHE and RSE. Not all secondary-age pupils receive clear, impartial careers advice and guidance. As a result, opportunities to promote pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and their preparation for their next steps are not as comprehensive as they should be. Leaders must ensure that pupils benefit from studying a PSHE curriculum which includes all age-appropriate aspects of RSE; prepares pupils for the next steps in their education and training, including through the receipt of appropriate careers advice and guidance; and better prepares pupils for life in modern Britain.
- The proprietor has not ensured that the school meets all the standards. As a result, pupils do not have the opportunities to learn as well as they could and prepare fully for life in modern Britain. The proprietor must ensure that the provision meets all the standards securely and consistently so that the provision helps to prepare pupils fully for when they leave the school.

## **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>	145949
<b>DfE registration number</b>	891/6039
<b>Local authority</b>	Nottinghamshire County Council
<b>Inspection number</b>	10254693
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	19
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	1
<b>Proprietor</b>	A Place to Call Our Own Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Matthew Abdy
<b>Headteacher</b>	Michaela Ledsham
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£22,800 to £51,300
<b>Telephone number</b>	01623 629902
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.aptcoo.co.uk">www.aptcoo.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:enquiries@aptcoo.org">enquiries@aptcoo.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	5 and 6 February 2019

## Information about this school

- APTCOO provides education for pupils with SEND. These pupils' additional needs include autism and social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school is currently registered to admit 20 pupils. There are 19 pupils on roll, most of whom have an EHC plan. Some of the pupils are in the care of their local authorities.
- The school has four sites. They are at Botany Avenue, Mansfield, NG18 5NF; Sandy Lane, Mansfield, NG18 2LT; Chameleon Lodge, Thoresby, Newark, NG22 9EW; and North Farm House, Budby, Newark, NG22 9EX.
- The headteacher took up post in November 2022. The chair of the proprietor body was appointed in September 2022.
- The school does not use the services of any alternative provision.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place in February 2019.

## 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 has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. They met with other leaders. They met with a range of staff.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the proprietor body remotely. He met with the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading/English, mathematics, PSHE and project-based learning. For each deep dive, inspectors met with teachers and curriculum leaders, visited sample lessons, looked at samples of pupils' work, and spoke with pupils when appropriate. They listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors looked at a range of other subjects, including art, horticulture, cooking, outdoor education and construction. They visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke with teachers about the planned learning.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about different aspects of school life.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including policies related to safeguarding, curriculum, health and safety, risk assessments and complaints.

Inspectors reviewed the single central record and safeguarding records.

- Inspectors toured the four sites to review the suitability of the accommodation.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents who submitted written comments on the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire. They considered responses to the staff questionnaire.

### **Inspection team**

Chris Davies, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Deirdre Duignan

Ofsted Inspector



## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

### **The school failed to meet the following independent school standards**

#### **Part 1. Quality of education provided**

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
  - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively.
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
  - 2(2)(d) personal, social, health and economic education which-
    - 2(2)(d)(i) reflects the school's aim and ethos; and
    - 2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act;
  - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that-
    - 2(2)(e)(i) is presented in an impartial manner;
    - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
    - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential;
  - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress; and
  - 2(2)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
- 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor-
  - 2A(1)(a) ensures that every registered pupil who is provided with primary education at the school is provided with relationships education,
  - 2A(1)(b) ensures that every registered pupil who is provided with secondary education at the school is provided with relationships and sex education, except in so far as the pupil is excused as mentioned in sub-paragraph (2),
  - 2A(1)(d) in making arrangements for the purposes of paragraphs (a), (b) or (c), has regard to any guidance under section 80A of the Education Act 2002 that applies in relation to the provision of education by maintained schools,

- 2A(1)(f) consults parents of registered pupils at the school before making or revising a statement under sub-paragraph (e).

## **Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor-
  - 5(a) actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
  - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which-
    - 5(b)(ii) enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England;
    - 5(b)(iv) enable pupils to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England;
    - 5(b)(v) further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures;
    - 5(b)(vi) encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act; and
    - 5(b)(vii) encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic process, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England.

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

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
  - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
  - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
  - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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