

# APTCOO - A Place to Call Our Own

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

## Inspection dates

5–6 February 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- This recently formed school operates over two sites: Botany Avenue and Sandy Lane. The school offers pupils a variety of appropriate academic and vocational experiences in safe and welcoming environments.
- The school provides well for pupils who have a range of social, emotional, communication and behavioural difficulties. Pupils who have spent a considerable amount of time out of mainstream education make good progress at the school.
- The proprietor, in conjunction with the newly appointed headteachers, has successfully built on the existing success of the school's well-established alternative provision.
- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching effectively, ensuring it is consistently good. Staff plan a range of activities that interest, motivate and engage pupils.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils are taught a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, plus practical subjects, such as photography, woodwork, and bicycle maintenance.
- Pupils' attendance increases significantly when compared with that at their previous school or setting.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. Incidents of poor behaviour and bullying are extremely rare.
- Staff know pupils and their families very well. Relationships between adults and pupils are positive. Pupils are happy and feel safe.
- The proprietor has ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders do not sufficiently provide pupils leaving key stage 4 with appropriate routes into post-16 education.
- Teachers do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to practise spelling, punctuation and grammar skills when writing in subjects other than English.
- Leaders do not consistently provide the governing body with sufficient information. The governing body does not consistently challenge leaders and hold them fully to account for the actions they take.

### 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?**

- Ensure that school leaders provide the governing body with sufficient information and that governors use this information to challenge school leaders, therefore holding them fully to account for their actions.
- Provide pupils with more frequent opportunities to practise spelling, punctuation and grammar skills in pieces of writing across a broad range of subjects.
- Provide pupils with appropriate routes into post-16 education.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The proprietor and joint headteachers set high expectations for staff and pupils alike. They are building on the success of the existing alternative provision and are determined to provide a wide range of effective services to help support vulnerable pupils and their families.
- The well-trained and experienced proprietor has a very good understanding of the school's strengths and development areas. The proprietor works in the school frequently and, therefore, knows the staff, pupils and families extremely well.
- The recently appointed joint headteachers possess a good mix of skills, knowledge and experience. One is mainly responsible for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), pupils' welfare and pastoral services, while the other is mainly responsible for the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and curriculum content. This sharing of responsibility through their individual specialisms works very well.
- Leaders are successful in motivating and encouraging staff to succeed. There is an appropriate number of monitoring activities that check on, for example, teachers' planning, the environment for learning, available resources and assessment opportunities. These activities ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good across both school sites.
- The majority of staff enjoy working at the school and state that they are proud to do so. They told the inspector that they enjoy staff training and are keen to learn and develop professionally.
- Leaders have ensured that there is a broad and balanced curriculum which supports pupils in their mathematical and English development. Leaders have also ensured that other subjects and topics, including art, science, physical education, cooking, photography and horticulture, are taught well.
- The leader responsible for the provision for pupils with SEND is knowledgeable and experienced. There are effective systems in place to assess pupils with SEND when they join the school, therefore ensuring that they receive the appropriate level of support. The school successfully 'signposts' families to appropriate external organisations as and when necessary.
- Transition arrangements before pupils join the school are a strength. Leaders ensure that they gain information about each pupil from a wide range of sources, including the pupil's family, school and, where appropriate, social care. This helps to ensure that staff know pupils well before they start at the school. Pupils, therefore, settle quickly, attend well and make good progress.
- Leaders are keen for pupils to bring benefit to the local community. For example, during a recent enterprise initiative, pupils repaired a considerable number of wheelchairs on behalf of Mansfield hospital.
- The proprietor has ensured that the school's safeguarding policy is made available to parents and carers on the school's website. The policy meets the required independent school standards.

- Parents are unanimous in their praise of the school, its staff and leaders. One comment, typical of many others, was:

'APTCOO provides my son with understanding, boundaries, space, empathy, a motivation to learn and a feeling of belonging, all in a very safe environment. They provide me, as a parent, a much-needed understanding ear, support, advice and reassurance.'

- The proprietor has ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The leader responsible for pupils' careers advice and guidance ensures that it is impartial and provides pupils with information regarding enterprise initiatives and potential apprenticeships. However, a number of pupils and parents are justifiably concerned regarding pupils' potential routes into post-16 education.
- Leaders do not always provide the governing body with sufficient information. Consequently, the governing body cannot hold leaders stringently to account for the actions they take.

### **Governance**

- The governing body has a very good mix of skills and experience. The governors are successfully building on their knowledge of governing the alternative provision by applying similar, effective monitoring procedures at the school.
- Individual governors have received relevant training in areas such as health and safety, child protection, safer recruitment and finance. They know the strengths and development areas of the school well.
- Minutes of governing body meetings show that governors do not consistently challenge leaders and hold them fully to account.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong safeguarding culture throughout the school. The designated safeguarding leads and staff have received appropriate and up-to-date training in such areas as the 'Prevent' duty, safeguarding young people and spotting the signs of child sexual exploitation and neglect. Staff are also aware of current issues around knife crime and 'county lines' drug trafficking.
- There is an effective system in place for adults to record any welfare concerns they may have about a pupil or family. Leaders and staff are aware of their duty to report any allegations regarding staff to the local authority local area designated officer. Displays around both school sites remind adults and pupils who they should contact should they have a welfare concern about a pupil or family.
- Appropriate checks are made on adults before they are allowed to volunteer or work at the school.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Adults are skilled in quickly building positive relationships with pupils, settling them into routines and earning their trust. As a result, pupils respond well to the appropriate and stimulating activities that are prepared for them.
- Practical activities are planned to combine mathematical and English content. For example, at Botany Avenue, pupils were engaged in making cheese frittatas in the school's beach hut café. Pupils successfully weighed out the ingredients and correctly calculated the costs and profits, before eventually selling the produce to members of staff. Pupils also sell a variety of vegetables during the summer, which they grow in the school's allotment.
- A healthy body topic is currently used successfully to teach the science curriculum. Pupils were observed sketching around their bodies and correctly drawing in the internal organs, including the heart, lungs and stomach.
- Adults possess good subject knowledge. For example, pupils at Sandy Lane were observed making pinhole cameras and correcting faults on bikes. Pupils are thoroughly engaged in these activities because they interest and stimulate them.
- Activities are well planned. For example, a large tree branch had been sanded down and varnished by pupils, before being set into a painted solid base as a piece of artwork. When asked what the artwork could be used for, they thoughtfully responded with: 'We could hang our photos from the branches, and call it an APTCOO family tree.'
- Adults insist on high standards. They encourage pupils to contribute fully during lessons and to try their best. Pupils respond well to these expectations by behaving well and producing work to a good standard for their ability.
- Termly reports to parents are detailed and informative. They contain relevant information regarding pupils' attendance, behaviour, attainment and progress. Parents are therefore kept up to date with their child's successes and future targets.
- Teachers do not provide pupils with frequent enough opportunities to develop spelling, punctuation and grammar skills when writing in subjects other than English. These skills are therefore not as well developed as they should be.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff are skilled in nurturing pupils and quickly gaining their trust. Pupils' positive attitudes, confidence and communication skills develop sharply, and over a relatively short period of time. One encouraging message on display at Botany Avenue states: 'We are learning through fun, without the fear of failure.'
- Pupils say they enjoy the school and feel safe. A typical comment was: 'Everyone is nice and kind. I like coming here because I'm doing something I'm interested in.'
- Pupils experience empathy for others through such activities as collecting for Remembrance Sunday, local charities and the 'Operation Christmas Child' shoebox appeal.

- Pupils are developing their understanding of different cultures by studying other countries, such as Brazil, Bulgaria, Afghanistan and Scotland, and locating them on a world map. Pupils understand that these countries have different currencies, populations, faiths and languages.
- Pupils are reminded of the British values of, for example, tolerance, respect, and the rule of law, through displays and work undertaken in the personal, social, health, and economic curriculum.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, especially when online. Pupils have produced a presentation to inform others of the dangers of sharing personal information when playing online games. The presentation contains a link to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) command should a pupil wish to report a concern.
- Pupils leaving key stage 4 do not receive sufficient information regarding their potential routes into post-16 education.

## Behaviour

- Pupils are unanimous in their view that behaviour is consistently good, and incidents of bullying are extremely rare. Any rare incidents of poor behaviour are diligently recorded and analysed for any patterns or potential triggers, so that any future incidents may be avoided.
- Pupils follow adults' instructions quickly, therefore enabling sessions to run smoothly and without interruption.
- Pupils' attendance is extremely high when compared with that in their previous school or setting.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- The school has not been operating long enough for pupils to take any formal recognised qualifications or end-of-key-stage tests. However, inspection evidence suggests that pupils, including pupils with SEND, are currently making good progress towards their individual targets.
- Pupils enter the school having typically missed large periods of their education. They have missed significant pieces of the national curriculum and therefore have large gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Pupils settle quickly into the school's routines and respond positively to adults' caring and nurturing ethos. This enables pupils to make good progress towards gaining functional-skills qualifications in English and mathematics.
- Pupils are making strong progress in mathematics. For example, they enjoy the challenge of developing their knowledge of the four rules of number and applying these skills to relevant problem-solving activities.
- A number of pupils are making good progress in reading. They state they enjoy the activity and read frequently. Their favourite authors include J.K. Rowling and Roald Dahl.
- Over recent years, some pupils who attended the alternative provision at the school have

been successfully re-integrated into mainstream education.

- Pupils are making less progress in writing. They do not practise their spelling, punctuation and grammar skills frequently enough for these skills to improve sufficiently well.

## School details

Unique reference number	145949
DfE registration number	891/6039
Inspection number	10081421

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 Special School
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1
Number of part-time pupils	6
Proprietor	Carol Burkitt
Chair	David Liggins
Joint Headteachers	Edward Dowell and Martin Cope
Annual fees (day pupils)	£81.20 to £243.75 per day
Telephone number	01623 629902
Website	<a href="http://www.aptfoot.co.uk">www.aptfoot.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:enquiries@aptfoot.org">enquiries@aptfoot.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- There is one full-time pupil on the school's roll. However, for this inspection, a number of part-time pupils have also been treated as pupils on the roll at this school, as this is where they attend for most, or all, of their education.
- A Place to Call Our Own opened in September 2018. The school had a successful pre-registration inspection in July 2018.
- The two joint headteachers joined the school in September 2018.
- The school operates over two sites, both of which are in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire.



They are at Botany Avenue NG18 5NG and Sandy Lane NG18 2LS.

- The school is registered to admit 20 full-time pupils in the age range five to 19. There are currently no full-time pupils in the sixth-form.
- The school aims to: 'improve the life chances of children, young people and their families who experience a wide range of barriers created by having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)'.
- The proprietor is responsible for a well-established alternative provision that is also called A Place to Call Our Own and operates from the same premises.

## Information about this inspection

- Ofsted announced the inspection to the headteacher the day before the inspection began.
- The inspector observed learning in lessons across the two school sites. He examined a variety of pupils' work in English, mathematics and other subjects.
- The inspector held a range of meetings with the proprietor, the joint headteachers, three members of staff and four governors, including the chair of the governing body. The inspector also spoke with four pupils and two parents.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents and policies, including those relating to the curriculum, assessment, school improvement planning, attendance and records relating to safeguarding.
- There were six responses to Ofsted's questionnaire Parent View, including the free-text service. There were three responses to Ofsted's staff survey and no responses to Ofsted's pupils' questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Peter Stonier, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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