

The Boxing Academy

23 Hackney Grove, Hackney, London E8 3NR

Inspection dates

15–17 November 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and governors have firmly established an alternative education provision that effectively meets the needs of disaffected young people.
- Leaders have ensured that the school is compliant with all the independent school standards and provides a good education.
- Leaders and members of staff passionately believe that through exceptional pastoral support and good teaching, pupils will be successful learners and responsible citizens. They positively deliver on this mission.
- Governors actively support and challenge school leaders to improve. They ensure that members of staff are meticulous in safeguarding pupils and ensuring their welfare.
- Teachers benefit from a comprehensive programme of training and support that improves their effectiveness. Teachers and pod leaders use the information they have on pupils' progress to prepare activities, which engage the pupils' interests. They provide well-targeted support to assist individual pupils. Consequently, pupils make good progress.
- Pupils make good progress from their very low starting points. All school leavers thus far have gone on to further education or training.
- Leaders have established extremely high expectations for behaviour. The daily boxing sessions train pupils to positively channel their energies and control their emotions. The comprehensive programme for personal development and the culture of care help pupils develop positive attitudes to learning. They raise their ambitions and direct their goals towards worthwhile careers and making a positive contribution to society.
- Not enough teaching provides sufficient challenge to ensure that pupils, especially the most able, make rapid progress.
- Occasionally, pupils do not understand the broader relevance of what they are learning or how to apply their skills to solve problems.
- The curriculum makes a very strong contribution to pupils' health, well-being and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is less effective, however, in providing a similar breadth for pupils' scientific, technological, aesthetic and creative education.

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?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - teachers learning from best practice already found in the school
 - raising expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially the most able, by providing even more challenging work and asking probing questions to deepen pupils' understanding
 - planning opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge, understanding and skills in different situations so that they can solve problems and appreciate the relevance of what they are learning to their lives and their futures.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management in developing the curriculum by increasing the opportunities for scientific, technological, aesthetic and creative education.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, leaders and governors have ensured that all members of staff are fully committed to the school's aims. They are determined to help disaffected pupils, whose circumstances make them vulnerable, transform their lives. They work with the mantra of never give up on any child. As a result, pupils begin to attend school regularly, to modify their behaviour and to work hard to achieve. Both cohorts of Year 11 pupils who have completed their education at the school have gone on to further education or training.
- Staff morale is very high. All who responded to the questionnaire were positive about every aspect of the school's work. Typical of the culture was a comment made by a member of staff who said, 'the school gave me the opportunity to help young people achieve and feel valued'.
- Most teachers are new to the school this year. Leaders ensure that teachers and pod leaders benefit from effective professional development. Members of staff work with colleagues in outstanding maintained schools and get support from external consultants who specialise in alternative education. Additionally, they benefit from internal mentoring and guidance from school leaders. Further, they are accountable for their pupils' progress through formal annual appraisal processes and half-termly meetings to check on pupils' progress. Because of this training and accountability, the quality of teaching is good and improving.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They achieve this through tough discipline and the highly effective work to help pupils take responsibility for their own actions. Members of staff support pupils in dealing with any welfare issues and they set high expectations for learning and achievement. Pupils told the inspector that the school has transformed their lives. One pupil, for instance, said that he had been expelled from three previous schools. In this school, he has learnt self-discipline and is determined to succeed in life. He said that he wants to be a responsible citizen and contribute to society. As a result, he is planning to go to college after this year to do a course in public services and then train to be a fire fighter. This is typical of what leaders achieve with pupils in this school.
- The curriculum offers pupils GCSE courses in English language, mathematics, religious education and physical education. In addition, all pupils study for a vocational accreditation in health and fitness and they learn and practise boxing every day. These courses ensure that pupils have the required qualifications to continue their studies or undertake training when they leave the school. Additionally, they effectively help pupils to stay physically fit and mentally healthy.
- Weekly courses on personal development and British values, as well as a range of enrichment activities, make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Through their studies and visits, pupils learn to tolerate and respect people with protected characteristics. A gold-medal Paralympian, who went blind in childhood, visited the school and discussed how he persevered to overcome his disability and participate in the Paralympics. This encouraged pupils to respect people with disabilities. He also inspired pupils to believe it is possible to overcome any challenges life might throw. Through other enrichment activities, pupils begin to understand the use of

science and technology in modern life and they have some experiences of music and art through such visits as those to the Royal Opera House and theatre productions. Leaders recognise that they need to expand pupils' scientific, technological, aesthetic and creative education.

- Leaders work effectively with parents so that parents are well informed and well placed to support their children at the school. Parents receive a weekly report on how their children have behaved in every lesson that week. Every half term they receive reports on their children's progress in each subject, their attitudes and effort. At the start of each term, parents join their children and their pod leader and together liaise with each teacher to agree targets for progress and learning in every subject. Members of staff stay in regular telephone contact with parents to inform them of their children's success and to raise any concerns that might arise.

Governance

- Governors, who are also the school's proprietors, in conjunction with school leaders, have ensured that the school meets all of the independent school standards.
- Governors bring a wide range of experience and expertise from the worlds of education, charity, law, business, human resources and finance. This has enabled them to provide strong leadership in establishing the school and planning for its future.
- Governors have a very clear strategic plan in place for developing the next phase of the school's growth. Through robust self-evaluation processes, information from the headteacher and their own monitoring, governors know the school's strengths. They are equally clear on what needs to improve.
- They frequently scrutinise information about pupils' progress and are well informed about the quality of teaching. They are clear that only members of staff who meet their appraisal targets are rewarded with pay increments.
- Governors visit the school regularly and have frequent contact with leaders. They are thus able to offer a good balance of support and challenge to drive the school forward.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils' safety and welfare are the number one priority in this school. All members of staff meet every day after school to discuss any issues or concern about all pupils that might have arisen that day. They are highly vigilant and take immediate action when appropriate.
- All members of staff have recently undertaken training and are knowledgeable about the latest government guidance. Further, they are well aware of the safeguarding issues that are prevalent in the local communities and for the pupils in the school.
- Members of staff know well every pupil and his/her family. Record keeping is thorough and the designated safeguarding lead has established strong links with a raft of agencies to support vulnerable pupils and their families.
- The school publishes its safeguarding policy on its website. The policy is up to date and has full regard to current government requirements. Members of staff have also read and

been trained on the latest changes to the statutory guidance.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is good and improving. As a result, pupils, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress. They acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding that effectively prepare them to proceed to post-16 education or training.
- Teachers are good role models as they know their subjects well and teach with enthusiasm. This inspires the pupils.
- Teachers and pod leaders work seamlessly together. Expectations of behaviour are extremely high. Members of staff tailor their support and help pupils to remain engaged for the duration of all lessons. As a result, pupils work attentively and make good progress.
- Teachers use pupils' individual education plans, as well as information from frequent assessments, to design activities that help pupils become successful learners and make good progress. Occasionally, the work set and questions posed do not challenge pupils enough, especially the most able, to make rapid progress.
- Teachers give frequent feedback to pupils. Therefore, pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Teaching makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For instance, during a religious education lesson seen, pupils discussed stereotyping and the distinction between prejudice and discrimination.
- Teaching of boxing is a notable strength. Boxing instructors help pupils to focus their minds as they acquire new skills and to channel their energies in a constructive way. As a result, pupils develop self-esteem; they learn to manage their anger positively and to work collaboratively with their peers. These positive outcomes instil a sense of worth and support pupils to engage well in lessons throughout the day.
- Teachers generally ensure that pupils develop a good understanding of key subject-related vocabulary. Occasionally, however, they do not extend pupils' literacy skills by teaching the relevance and links in their reading and writing to other areas. When learning about the word 'deficit' in relation to loss of oxygen while exercising, for example, pupils did not learn the wider context of this term such as 'financial deficit'. In mathematics, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to apply their skills to solve problems. This limits pupils from making rapid progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Typically, pupils join this alternative provision with low self-esteem and poor social skills. Because of the excellent attention given to ensuring the pupils' welfare and the nurturing environment, pupils quickly gain in confidence, learn to be responsible citizens and study hard.

- Pupils take pride in their school and in their work. Pupils told the inspector that they are now learning very well and getting much better prepared for their futures than had been the case in their previous schools. Their pride is evident in the very neat and tidy ways in which they present their work.
- Members of staff, especially the inclusion leader, vigorously promote and support pupils' mental health. Pupils benefit from a programme of study designed by a national charity committed to improving the emotional well-being and mental health of children and young people. Topics covered include 'finding somewhere to belong' and 'what is a good friendship?', for instance. School counsellors and a range of external expert agencies actively support pupils and their parents to address any mental health, behavioural or any other barriers that they face. Consequently, pupils develop self-worth, stronger interpersonal skills and a general sense of well-being.
- Pupils know how to stay safe and avoid danger. They have opportunities to learn about and discuss topics such as substance abuse, crime, radicalisation, the dangers of the internet and domestic violence. Visitors, including staff from the National Health Service safe sex team and the Metropolitan Police, give a specialist perspective. Pupils also attend a prison for a day's workshop called 'KeepOut', a crime diversion scheme delivered by dedicated teams of serving prisoners.
- Through daily boxing and the health and fitness course, pupils' physical fitness and understanding of how to be healthy is exceptionally well developed. Further, through boxing, they undertake an accredited sports first aid training course. They also have opportunities to contribute to the wider community. Pupils learn to demonstrate and to coach people in boxing skills. Last year, they led sessions at an organisation supporting adults with mental health issues as well as in local primary schools.
- Pupils receive high-quality, impartial information and guidance as well as workshops on employability and work experience. As a result, they are extremely well prepared for the next stages of their lives. Additionally, members of staff regularly keep in touch with graduates to keep an eye on how they are doing and to offer additional support if required.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. They rapidly settle into their new environment and learn to respond extremely well to the exceptionally high standards of behaviour and discipline expected at the school. As they quickly realise the many benefits, pupils modify their behaviour and attitudes and soon conduct themselves maturely and with self-discipline.
- Behaviour in lessons is excellent. Pupils respond very positively to their teachers and pod leaders and quickly learn to value how much they have to gain from applying themselves diligently to their learning. As a result, learning proceeds uninterrupted and conduct around the school is courteous.
- Last year, the inclusion leader made it a priority to increase levels of attendance. As a result of her close work with parents and external agencies, attendance rates last year increased by 14% on the previous year. Overall attendance is now well above attendance rates found nationally in similar schools. Equally, rates of persistent absence are decreasing.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils join the school during key stage 4 with standards that are well below those expected for their age. This is because they arrive having had a disrupted education at key stage 3 during which they made little or no progress.
- Pupils, including the most able, make good progress in all subjects. This is because they settle down to hard work in this school and develop ambitions to pursue successful careers. Work seen in pupils' books confirms the leaders' view that current pupils are making good progress overall.
- In 2016, results for Year 11 showed an improvement on the previous year. Overall standards reached in GCSE examinations were above those found nationally in 2015 for similar schools.
- The most able pupils make similar good progress from their starting points as their peers. Occasionally, they make rapid progress. In 2016, 15% of the cohort attained an A* in physical education, a much higher proportion than that found nationally in similar schools. In most subjects, the proportions reaching a B grade were above those found nationally in similar schools.
- All pupils who have graduated from this school since it opened have continued to further education or training.

School details

Unique reference number	141516
DfE registration number	204/6010
Inspection number	10023023

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	Alternative provision
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	14 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	36
Proprietor	The Boxing Academy
Chair	Paul Buchanan
Headteacher	Anna Cain
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,000
Telephone number	020 8986 4674
Website	www.theboxingacademy.co.uk
Email address	mail@theboxingacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school was registered by the Department for Education on 17 October 2014. This was the school's first standard inspection.
- The school is an alternative provision located in the London borough of Hackney. It caters for disaffected pupils who have had a disrupted education and been expelled from mainstream schools or pupil referral units. All pupils have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- Currently there is no pupil on roll with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school aims to support pupils in their education, improve their health and happiness

and encourage them to aim for a better future.

- Classes are organised into pods of around eight pupils each. A boxing instructor who oversees the pupils' welfare and learning needs leads each pod. The pod leader also accompanies his pupils to all lessons, assisting the teachers and supporting the pupils with their learning.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- Learning was observed in 10 lessons; all were joint observations with the headteacher or with the leader of teaching and learning.
- Samples of pupils' work were scrutinised. The school's information about pupils' progress was also checked.
- The inspector spoke to the headteacher, leaders and teachers. A meeting was held with the chair of the governors and three other governors. There was also a formal discussion with a group of pupils and various informal discussions with pupils during breaktimes and in lessons.
- The inspector took account of the 11 responses to the questionnaire for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. The inspector did take account of the 23 responses to the school's own questionnaire given to parents at the start of term.
- Documentation, policies and all aspects of the school's work were checked for compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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