

School of Coding AEP Limited

Unit 8 Newton Court, Pendeford Business Park, Wolverhampton WV9 5HB

Inspection date

25 September 2024

Overall outcome

The school is unlikely to meet all the independent school standards when it opens

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 2(1) to 3(i)

- The proprietor and leaders have a clear vision for the proposed school. The school will aim to provide for pupils who are facing difficulties in mainstream schools and need enhanced support. This includes providing access to appropriate qualifications and accreditation. This vision is enriched by access to high-quality computing, programming and artificial intelligence courses.
- The core academic curriculum comprises of subjects that meet the requirements of the independent school standards (the standards). These include English, mathematics, science, computer science, programming, creativity, work skills and humanities.
- Since the last pre-registration inspection, the school has developed well-written schemes of work. An extensive range of curriculum plans were submitted with the application.
- There is a clear and well-articulated vision for how the proposed school will meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). While the proprietor expects these will be primarily linked to social, emotional and mental health needs or autism, they also understand and plan for other potential needs. The SEND policy describes a range of provisions to meet the needs of pupils. The school has formed partnerships with external services, such as local authorities, to develop systems for how the school will identify, assess and meet the individual needs of pupils, including those with education, health and care plans (EHC plan).

Paragraphs 2(2)(e) to 2(2)(e)(iii)

- Through the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum, leaders have developed a suitable plan to ensure pupils receive impartial careers information, education, advice and guidance. For example, schemes of work provide opportunities to develop employability skills, write job applications and develop an understanding of careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The proprietor has already developed relationships with various careers services providing impartial advice.

- The school intends to build on the proprietor's strong links with European and South Asian industries to provide international work experience opportunities. The school currently offers courses for adults to provide access to the world of work and is keen to offer these opportunities to pupils at the proposed school.

Paragraphs 3, 3(a) to 4

- The school has already developed a highly skilled and experienced teaching workforce for those pupils attending the provision. This workforce has provided after-school clubs in primary schools across the West Midlands and holiday clubs focusing on computing and programming for some years. Recent recruitments have brought an added level of expertise in the form of a qualified and experienced teacher.
- The proprietor intends that English and mathematics teachers will be qualified teachers and experts in their respective subjects. The other staff will be unqualified teachers.

Paragraphs 2A(1) to 2A(2)

- The relationships and sex education (RSE) policy sits alongside the PSHE policy. This RSE policy and associated schemes and plans for learning are carefully considered. The issues facing young people in their personal lives and local communities are prioritised. For example, there is a heightened focus on managing conflict in relationships, avoiding toxic influences and staying safe from potential exploitation.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

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

Paragraphs 5, 5(a) to 5(d)(iii)

- Careful consideration has been given to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. Carefully considered lessons for SMSC are planned alongside subjects such as mathematics or English to provide pupils with opportunities to reflect on social, moral, cultural and spiritual issues. For example, in mathematics, pupils will be encouraged to consider such matters as 'How does the pursuit of mathematical knowledge connect to deeper questions about the nature of reality and existence?'
- A well-planned programme of mentoring and pastoral care threads through the intended curriculum, underpinned by various social and emotional development approaches.
- There is no evidence in curriculum plans or wider documentation suggesting that fundamental British values will be undermined. Instead, leaders explain clearly how these values will be promoted through the curriculum and other activities such as visiting different places of worship and places of interest, for example airfields. Leaders are keen to develop the pupils' voices, even in day-to-day arrangements such as deciding how to develop the range of clubs and extracurricular activities.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b), 32(1)(c)

- The proposed systems for safeguarding are well defined. Systems will match and fulfil the expectations of current national statutory guidance. Staff training is already ongoing. Staff at the current provision were knowledgeable about their safeguarding responsibilities and uncompromising in their tenacity to act when they even suspected a child might be at risk. Appointed leaders for safeguarding already have a strong knowledge of guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and have created systems, processes and policies to embrace these expectations.

Paragraphs 9 and 10

- The school's proposed behaviour policy is well written and shared with staff. The proprietor and leaders have a clear, caring vision for providing pupils with a 'fresh start', regardless of their difficulties. This ethos runs through the policy and the observed interactions between existing staff and pupils who attend the current provision. Systems to record and analyse behaviour incidents are thorough. They will give leaders an understanding of patterns of behaviour and the necessary actions they need to take to address the behaviour.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 13, and 16

- The health and safety policy is detailed. The advice is comprehensive, and it is clear what expectations are in different areas. Staff induction reinforces these messages from the first day staff start at the school.
- Health and safety checks are thorough. For example, they include fire extinguisher and emergency lighting checks. The headteacher is trained as a fire marshal, and fire safety is intended to be included in the staff induction process. A fire risk assessment has been recently completed, and leaders have acted on the points for action.
- Risk assessments support efforts to raise awareness of the complexities of managing the site, the pupils' educational experiences, visits and trips and keeping pupils safe.

Paragraphs 14 and 15

- There are currently four pupils dual-rolled with other schools at the alternative provision. These pupils are appropriately recorded on the school's admission register. The school's information on the admissions register aligns with the DfE's guidance.
- The staff-to-pupil ratio suggests pupils are likely to be suitably supervised throughout the school day. It is intended that pupils work with different teachers, but each pupil will have a named staff member to support their welfare.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraphs 18(3), 19(2), 19(3), 21(2), 21(3)(a)(i), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iv) to 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(4), 21(5), 21(6), 21(7)

- The single central record (SCR) template is compliant and in line with 'Keeping children safe in education (2024)' statutory guidance. For the already appointed staff, the necessary checks, as advocated by the current guidance from the DfE, are prevalent on the SCR. Inspectors sampled four staff files, and the information in each file was triangulated precisely with the SCR.

- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Paragraphs 18(2), 20(6), 21(1), 21(3), 21(3)(a)(iii)

- While the proprietor has ensured that many pre-appointment checks such as references, barred lists checks, enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks and health checks have been completed, prohibition from teaching checks still need to be completed on all staff members involved in teaching at the proposed school. This was raised at the first pre-registration inspection. While there is evidence that prohibition checks have been completed on recently recruited staff, these checks have yet to be completed on other relevant staff members.
- During this pre-registration inspection, leaders applied for these checks to be completed for all remaining teaching staff, including tutors and additional support staff.
- The proprietor has not ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1) to 29(1)(b)

- Within the proposed school building, all rooms are well lit and have good acoustics. The premises have been refurbished and decorated to a high standard. The building has offices, toilets, a kitchen and medical facilities.
- The two classrooms are on the ground floor of this building, and the upper floor is for administration and leadership offices. There is suitable space for the pupils to learn. However, this space is based around one large classroom and one room with computers. This provides appropriate space for up to 20 pupils, which could impact the provision for 30 pupils on site.
- There is one unisex toilet for pupils and a separate toilet for staff. Both have hot and cold running water and handwashing facilities. The water temperature is suitably regulated. The medical room is spacious and contains a washbasin. It is close to a toilet.
- The proprietor has purchased a 17-seater minibus to transport pupils to a nearby community play area, a local nature walk or the local sports centre. All are located within a five-minute drive.
- There is currently no shower in the proposed school. Leaders intend to use a local leisure centre in the physical education curriculum. The centre's facilities include a swimming pool and a sports hall. Showers are available in the leisure centre if pupils need to use them. Staff will transport pupils to the centre in the school's minibus.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraphs 32(1) to 32(3)(f)

- All policies, documents and information required for the pre-registration inspection were provided promptly. Where relevant, policies reflect that the proposed school will cater for pupils with specific needs or who might need a specific form of support to be

ready for further education, employment or training. Policies are clear, well presented and written in accessible language.

- The school's website contains the information required by the standards. This includes curriculum information, admission guidance and behaviour and safeguarding policies.
- Annual reports will provide parents and carers with information about their child's achievement in each subject and their child's engagement in learning and school. The report will include comments from the headteacher.
- Leaders have a comprehensive understanding of how relevant staff will contribute to the annual review process for pupils with an EHC plan. In addition, parents and pupils are intended to play a key role in this process.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33

- The complaints policy is clear and precise. It outlines what needs to be done at each stage. The aim is to resolve complaints informally, but more formal steps are outlined, including a panel hearing. The policy sets out suitable timeframes for dealing with complaints. Leaders have articulated transparent systems and processes for learning from any complaints to reduce the chance of the complaint happening again. The complaints policy is on the website and accessible to parents should it be needed.
- The proprietor has ensured that this standard is likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) 34 (1)(c)

- At the first pre-registration inspection, the proposed school had yet to ensure that the standards for completing prohibition from teaching checks were completed. This meant that some staff were employed at the school without some necessary checks completed. At the time of this second pre-registration inspection, the proposed school had yet to ensure that these checks had been completed. This means that the standards relating to knowledge of the standards and the consistent meeting of these standards currently need to be met.
- The proprietor has not ensured that these standards are likely to be met

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- Leaders have ensured that they have a suitable accessibility plan in place that meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The proposed school considers and plans for the needs of pupils with SEND.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school is unlikely to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements, as set out in the annex of this report.

Proposed school details

Unique reference number	151123
DfE registration number	336/6018
Inspection number	10358442

This inspection was carried out under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards that are required for registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent day school
Proprietor	School of Coding AEP Limited
Chair	Sandeep Athwal
Headteacher	Suki Gill
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37,050 to £56,050
Telephone number	01902 509209
Website	www.socalternativeeducation.com
Email address	suki@schoolofcoding.co.uk

Provider already operating

Number of pupils of compulsory school age	4
Number of pupils of compulsory school age who have an education, health and care plan, or who are looked after by a local authority	0
Total hours operating as a school per week	25
Total hours of teaching provided per week	20

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	13 to 16	13 to 16	13 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	4	30	20

Reason for inspector's recommendations

- The school currently has only space for one unisex toilet on site, which would be appropriate for up to 20 pupils. Equally, at the moment, the space for learning is limited to one large space, with a current capacity of 14 and one smaller space that currently has a capacity for six pupils working at computer workstations. Leaders identify that they have further tables and chairs that could be available, but using additional tables and chairs would limit access and egress to different parts of the learning space.

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	0	30
Number of part-time pupils	4	30
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	4	30
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	0	30
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	0	30

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	7	7
Number of part-time teaching staff	3	3
Number of staff in the welfare provision	1	1

Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school was previously a business unit containing offices in Pendeford

Business Park, on the outskirts of Wolverhampton.

- The proposed school intends to cater to boys and girls aged 13 to 16 years.
- The proposed school will cater exclusively to pupils with additional needs needing alternative provision. The core function of the proposed school will be to teach employability in computing skills in the workplace. Local authorities will place the pupils in the school, mainly Walsall and Wolverhampton. The school will also take short-term dual-rolled placements from local secondary schools.
- The proprietor currently runs an unregistered alternative provision for pupils at risk of exclusion or who require focused intervention to develop a range of computing skills.
- The proposed school will not have a religious denomination.
- The proposed school does not intend to use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The DfE commissioned this pre-registration inspection to determine whether the proposed school is likely to meet the independent school standards if permitted to open. This is the proposed school's second pre-registration inspection.
- The lead inspector reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the school's single central record of pre-employment checks.
- The inspector toured the proposed school's premises and visited the local play area that the school intends to use for outdoor play.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher and staff members who currently work at their alternative provision. He also met with the staff members responsible for administering staff recruitment and the finance manager.

Inspection team

Chris Pollitt, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school is unlikely to meet the following independent school standards

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 18(2)(b) no such person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction.
- 20(6) The standard in this paragraph is met in relation to an individual ("MB"), not being the Chair of the school, who is a member of a body of persons corporate or unincorporate named as the proprietor of the school in the register or in an application to enter the school in the register, if-
 - 20(6)(a) MB-
 - 20(6)(a)(ii) does not carry out work, or intend to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction.
 - 21(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor keeps a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question.
 - 21(3) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is-
 - 21(3)(a) in relation to each member of staff ("S") appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether-
 - 21(3)(a)(iii) a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction;
 - 21(3)(b) in relation to each member of staff ("S"), whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed.

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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