

School of Coding AEP Limited

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

Inspection date

16 April 2025

Overall outcome

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

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(1) to 2(2)(i)

- The proprietor and leaders have a clear vision for the proposed school to support pupils who struggle in mainstream schools and require additional help, as well as those with a strong interest in computer science, coding or artificial intelligence. The school aims to offer relevant qualifications and accreditation, complemented by access to high-quality computing, programming and artificial intelligence courses.
- The core academic curriculum comprises subjects that meet the independent school standards (the standards) requirements. These include English, mathematics, science, computer science, programming, creativity, work skills and humanities.
- The school has developed well-written work schemes. An extensive range of curriculum plans were submitted with the application. In all cases, a range of appropriately detailed resources is already available to support learning.
- The proposed school has a well-defined and communicated strategy for supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The proprietor anticipates that most needs will relate to specific learning difficulties or autism, but it also prepares for other additional needs, such as moderate learning difficulties. The SEND policy outlines various provisions designed to address pupils' needs effectively. To enhance its approach, the school has established collaborations with external organisations, including local authorities, to create systems for identifying, assessing and accommodating the individual needs of students, including those with education, health and care plans (EHC plan).

Paragraph 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. The proprietor has already developed relationships with various careers services providing impartial advice.

Paragraphs 3 to 4

- The school has successfully built a knowledgeable and proficient teaching team to support pupils enrolled in the alternative provision. This team has already been delivering after-school programs in primary schools throughout the West Midlands and holiday clubs specialising in computing and programming for several years.
- The proprietor intends that the English and mathematics teachers will be qualified experts in their respective subjects, while the other staff will be unqualified teachers.
- Staff training is already evident in the current provision. At the end of every day, current staff members come together to share knowledge and expertise about courses they have recently taken or additional information about specific pupils' needs. During the pre-registration inspection, staff spoke about their face-to-face and online training.
- The school has given some thought to supporting those pupils who might need additional support with reading. They have purchased a range of appropriate texts to support the development of early reading and have a member of staff who is skilled and knowledgeable in teaching phonics already appointed.

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

- The relationships and sex education policy is integrated with the PSHE policy and associated schemes of work. Both the policy and its related learning schemes are thoughtfully developed. Key challenges affecting young people in their personal lives and local communities are given priority. For instance, there is an increased emphasis on handling relationship conflicts, avoiding harmful influences and protecting oneself from potential exploitation.
- The proprietor has ensured that these independent school standards (the standards) are likely to be met.

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

Paragraph 5 to 5(d)(iii)

- Carefully considered learning activities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are to be delivered 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-designed 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 theatres. The school is keen to develop the pupils' voices, even in day-to-day arrangements, such as deciding how to further develop the range of clubs and extra-curricular activities.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Part 6. Provision of information

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

- The proposed systems for safeguarding are well defined. Staff training is already ongoing. 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, 10

- The proposed school's behaviour policy is well crafted and communicated to staff effectively. The proprietor and leadership team uphold a compassionate vision, ensuring pupils receive a 'fresh start' regardless of the challenges they face. Comprehensive systems are in place to document and assess behaviour incidents, enabling leaders to identify trends and implement appropriate measures to support and guide pupils effectively.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 13, 16

- The health and safety policy is detailed. The guidance for staff is comprehensive, and it is clear what expectations are for all staff in different areas, for example lone working, risk assessment and fire safety. Staff induction reinforces these messages from the first day staff start at the school.
- The school's health and safety checks are meticulous, covering essential aspects such as fire extinguisher maintenance and emergency lighting assessments. The headteacher, along with other staff members, has undergone fire marshal training, ensuring preparedness in case of emergencies. Fire safety guidelines are prominently displayed throughout the school. A fire risk assessment has also been conducted, with leaders promptly addressing the recommended actions.
- Risk assessments support efforts to raise awareness of the complexities of managing the site, pupils' educational experiences, visits and trips and keeping pupils safe. The inspector sampled risk assessments for the school's site and educational visits to local theatres or university campuses. These demonstrate a detailed understanding of potential risks and an appropriate and rigorous understanding of the measures that must be implemented to reduce these risks.

Paragraphs 14, 15

- There are currently seven pupils who access the alternative provision on a part-time basis. All of these pupils are dual-rolled with other secondary schools. These pupils are appropriately recorded on the school's admissions register. The information the proposed school plans to include 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. Although pupils are intended to work with different teachers, each 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(2) to 21(7)(b)

- At the last pre-registration inspection, the school did not ensure that the necessary prohibition from teaching checks had been completed on all staff members. This is no longer the case, as the school has demonstrated that these and other pre-employment checks have been completed for all staff members involved in teaching. Since that inspection, the school has continued refining the human resources processes, including appointing additional capacity in this team.
- The proposed school has established thorough recruitment protocols. A well-structured and thoughtfully designed hiring process guarantees that only individuals who align with the school's strong commitment to student safety are selected. This involves securing references ahead of the interview stage. All essential pre-employment screenings would be completed before any job offer is extended.
- The single central record (SCR) template appears to comply with the 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' 2024 statutory guidelines. The human resources team will be responsible for updating the SCR as new staff members join the school. The headteacher will then review and approve these recruitment checks to confirm that all necessary screenings have been conducted. For existing staff, the SCR already includes the required checks per the most recent guidance from the DfE. The inspector reviewed the recruitment process for current employees, and his findings indicate that safeguarding is given significant priority.
- Processes for staff induction are robust and articulated well. A checklist provides a framework for ensuring that staff are up to speed in their awareness of systems, policies and processes as soon as possible. For example, as part of the health and safety induction, staff complete detailed training on what they should do if the risk to the pupils from an intruder or external public members arises, as well as first-aid training.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

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

- In 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. On the upper floor, there is also capacity for additional learning spaces when required. These are all suitable spaces for the pupils to learn.
- 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 portable washbasin. It is close to a toilet.

- The school has established appropriate access to fresh drinking-water, which is marked as such. This drinking-water facility is currently placed on the upper floor of the proposed school building. The proprietor has said that should the registration be granted it will be moved downstairs to ease access for pupils.
- The proprietor has purchased a nine-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 for 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

Paragraph 32(1) to 32(3)(g)

- All necessary requested policies, documents and information for the pre-registration inspection were submitted by the proprietor and leaders without delay. Where applicable, the policies demonstrate that the proposed school will accommodate students with specific needs or those who may require tailored support to prepare for further education, employment or training. The policies are well structured, clearly presented and written in a way that is easy to understand.
- The school's website contains the information required by the standards. This includes curriculum information, admission guidance, 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 this standard is likely to be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33 to 33(k)

- The complaints policy is well defined and straightforward, detailing the necessary steps at each stage of the process. While the primary goal is to resolve concerns informally, the policy also includes structured procedures for formal resolutions such as a panel hearing. Clear timelines are established for handling complaints efficiently. Leaders have put in place transparent systems to analyse and learn from any complaints, aiming to minimise the likelihood of recurrence. The policy is readily available on the website, ensuring parents can access it whenever required.
- The proprietor has ensured that this standard is likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1) to 34(1)(c)

- The proprietor and leaders have a clear and reasoned rationale for opening the school. They want to provide a high-quality curriculum and provision for those pupils who might have had difficult experiences at other education settings and require something alternative. The school also aims to support pupils with autism and those with specific learning difficulties. At the heart of this proposed curriculum will be a focus on learning about and using computer science, coding and artificial intelligence.
- The school has a realistic growth plan and intends to admit new pupils gradually if registration is granted. For example, of the seven pupils currently attending the provision on a part-time basis, some intend to become full-time should registration be granted. The proprietor is also very clear about the admissions criteria for the school and feels that it will only be able to admit pupils if the school has the necessary skills and knowledge to meet their needs appropriately.
- During the pre-registration process, the proprietor, leaders and governing body demonstrated the skills, knowledge and experience linked to maintaining the standards consistently over time. All are experienced independent schools or specialists in SEND, and all were able to articulate the requirements for registration carefully. The proprietor has established multi-layered monitoring systems to ensure the headteacher and other staff effectively fulfil their responsibilities.
- The proprietor has implemented a comprehensive system of oversight both to support and challenge the headteacher and staff, ensuring they carry out their duties efficiently. It is eager to expand the proposed school, building on its achievements in preparation for registration. For instance, it has already engaged community members ready to take on governance roles if the registration is approved.
- The proprietor has ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- Leaders have ensured they have a suitable accessibility plan in place that meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school is likely to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Proposed school details

Unique reference number	151496
DfE registration number	336/6020
Inspection number	10381832

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	socalternativeeducation.com
Email address	suki@schoolofcoding.co.uk

Provider already operating

Number of pupils of compulsory school age	7
Number of pupils of compulsory school age who have an EHC plan, or who are looked after by a local authority	5
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	7	20	20

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	0	20
Number of part-time pupils	7	20
Number of pupils with SEND	7	20
Of which, number of pupils with an EHC plan	5	20
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an EHC plan	7	20

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	5	5
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	2	2

Information about this proposed school

- The site for 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 is designed specifically for pupils with additional needs who require alternative education. Its primary purpose is to equip them with workplace computing skills to enhance their employability. Pupils will be placed by local authorities, primarily from Walsall and Wolverhampton. Additionally, the school will accommodate short-term dual-enrolled placements from nearby secondary schools.
- The proprietor currently runs an unregistered alternative provision for pupils who require focused intervention or are at risk of exclusion to develop a range of computing skills. All of the pupils currently on roll attend the provision on a purely part-time basis.
- 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 standards if permitted to open. This is the proposed school's second pre-registration inspection.
- The 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.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and staff members who currently work at the 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

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