

Flexible Learning Centre

Independent school progress monitoring inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Michael Best

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005.^{1,2}

The inspection was conducted at the request of the Registration Authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan following the previous inspection.

Information about the school

Flexible Learning Centre is an independent day school that is located on three sites in different parts of Birmingham. The headteacher is the proprietor and owner of the school. The school, which opened in September 2008, provides an alternative education for students aged from 14 to 16 years. Its main aim is to help students to overcome any disadvantages and disaffection in order to achieve their full potential. Forty one students are currently enrolled. About a third attend full time and the rest on a part-time basis. A significant number of students are dually registered: they attend the centre and are also on the roll of local secondary schools.

The intake of the school is multiracial and the vast majority of students have been admitted since September 2009. None has a statement of special educational needs. The vast majority of the students have personal, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties that have resulted in them not doing as well as they could at school. The majority of staff have been appointed in the last twelve months.

Context of the inspection

The school was previously inspected by Ofsted in March 2010 when it met most, but not all, of the regulatory requirements for independent schools. The school submitted an action plan to the Department for Education to address the shortcomings identified in the report; this was judged to be inadequate in June 2010. The school revised its action plan in July 2010 but did not submit it to the Department. This is the first monitoring visit to check the progress made by the school in implementing its action plan.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

The inspection in March 2010 found that the school's child protection policy was out-of-date and not implemented properly. The school revised its child protection policy in July 2010 but a number of omissions remain, including: dealing with the abuse of students by another student; correctly naming the staff responsible for child protection matters; the frequency of training for all staff and the designated persons; the arrangements for reviewing the school's policy and practices and addressing deficiencies in these immediately; and the requirement for reporting incidents within specified timescales to Ofsted, the local safeguarding board and the Independent Safeguarding Authority. Awareness training in safeguarding for staff was provided in September 2010. Further staff training, including higher level training for designated persons, has been recently booked but has not yet been completed. The regulation remains unmet.

When the school was inspected in March 2010, the guidance for activities outside school was neither comprehensive enough nor fully implemented. The school has adopted and adapted a suitable policy, although this is neither dated nor signed, that has regard for the Department's guidance. Completed risk assessments from the start of this school year (September 2010) were seen during this visit. They identify the level of risk and the school's response to it; however, none of these assessments listed the names of the students involved in the activity, the name(s) of the staff responsible, or were signed by the risk assessor and countersigned by a senior member of staff. The regulation remains unmet.

The inspection in March 2010 found that there was no electrical equipment register and not all portable electrical equipment had been subject to inspection by a qualified person. The school has taken appropriate action and the regulation is now met. The inspection also found that the fire alarm and electrical lighting systems on two of the sites had not been inspected, tested and serviced within recommended timescales. These tests have been carried out and the regulation is now met. The school now meets the regulations for maintaining an admission register. It has also drawn up an appropriate three-year plan which meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

Although the inspection in March 2010 found that the first aid policy was satisfactory, the school did not ensure a qualified first aider was on each site at all times. In order to achieve this, the school has arranged first aid training for all members of staff but this has yet to be completed, so the regulation remains unmet.

The inspection in March 2010 found that procedures for vetting staff were insufficiently robust and that, while a single central register was kept, it was not fully compliant. These shortcomings have been addressed and the appropriate regulations are now met.

The inspection in March 2010 found that the Erdington and Hockley sites did not have adequate outdoor space for play and recreation. This remains the case and the regulation remains unmet.

At the time of the inspection in March 2010, the school did not make available various items of information to parents and carers, and to prospective parents and carers. Details of academic performance in the preceding school year are now included in the prospectus and parents and carers are provided with a copy of the school's safeguarding policy. Parents and carers now receive an annual written report which highlights their children's achievements and indicates their next steps in learning. These regulations are now met. However, the school still fails to advise parents and carers that they can request details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

As a result of this inspection, the school must take action to meet The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010³ ('the Regulations'), as follows:

- improve the quality of the child protection policy and ensure that it is implemented effectively, and ensure that all staff are appropriately trained to fulfil their child protection duties (paragraph 7)
- ensure that risk assessments are properly completed for all educational visits or trips off site (paragraph 12)
- ensure that at all times at least one qualified first-aider is on every site occupied by the school (paragraph 14)
- provide adequate outside space in every school location for recreation and play (paragraph 23(s))
- ensure that the school makes available and informs parents and prospective parents that they can request details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 24(1)b)).

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Secondary		
Date school opened	September 2008		
Age range of pupils	14–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 7	Girls: 6	Total: 13
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 19	Girls: 9	Total: 28
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£9.50 per hour for full-time students (25 hours per week) £10.50 per hour for part-time students (less than 25 hours per week)		
Address of school	204 Slade Road, Erdington, Birmingham B23 7RJ		
Telephone number	0121 240 3718		
Email address	shamim@flexiblelearning.org.uk		
Headteacher	Ms Shamim Akhtar		
Proprietor	Ms Shamim Akhtar		