

On Track Education Centre (Silsoe)

Independent school light-touch inspection report

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Reporting inspector	David Rzeznik HMI

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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, 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.^{1, 2}

This was a light touch inspection which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

On Track Education Centre (Silsoe) is a small, independent special school located on two sites in Silsoe and Bedford. The school opened in September 1996 to provide an alternative education for students aged from 11 to 17 years. Students are referred by local authorities and schools. They join and leave throughout the year. Each student follows an individual learning programme which, for some, includes study at their local school or at home.

Currently, there are 17 students on roll aged 12 to 16 years. Seven students attend full-time and 10 part-time. Most students are taught on the Silsoe site with one-to-one tuition currently provided for four part-time students on the Bedford premises. Most of the students are of White British heritage and have been in school for less than a year. All have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and all have a history of disrupted schooling, poor attendance or exclusion which has badly affected their attainment and progress. Eleven students have a statement of special educational needs.

In February 2010, the school moved from Luton to Silsoe and incorporated another alternative education provider known as 'Learning Zone' into the school. This is the school's second inspection. Its first was in November 2007.

On Track's mission is 'to enable young people to experience positive achievement and success through their studies and acquire diverse skills and knowledge in preparation for adult life and to develop a desire to learn.'

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

Evaluation of the school

The school provides a good quality of education and is successful in improving students' basic skills, attendance, behaviour and self-esteem. Teaching and learning are good and relationships between students and staff are excellent. Safeguarding procedures are good and students are cared for well. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. All the regulations that were failed during the last inspection are now met. Fire safety procedures have improved and the required fire risk assessments and fire drills are carried out. Lesson planning is good and suitable account is taken of students' prior attainment when planning work. Attendance register are now kept in good order. The school has moved to new premises and they are of good quality. The school meets all of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The alternative curriculum is good. The education provided in the main school, on the Silsoe site, is for full and part-timers and is primarily based at Key Stage 3 on National Curriculum subjects and at Key Stage 4 on GCSE subjects. In both phases provision is suitably complemented by AQA unit awards work that lead to qualifications at various levels. Provision in the satellite 'Learning Zone' in Bedford is for part-timers only, and is geared to the requirements of the referring school or local authority. All 'Learning Zone' students are taught one-to-one with most attending for less than nine hours a week.

In both settings the curriculum rightly focuses on improving students' basic skills, attitudes to learning and behaviour. Subject matter is well matched to students' capabilities and the objectives set in their statements of special educational needs. As a result, students' personal and academic needs are met effectively. Individuals say that they like the personal attention, support and guidance that they receive. One student reported, 'The school built up my confidence and helped me enjoy school again. They help me with my work and learning. I have made new friends which I did not have before.' Inspectors spoke to other students who felt the same way. Since the last inspection the provision has widen to include some vocational studies. This academic year some students are studying a BTEC National Diploma in Catering and Hospitality and other courses are under consideration.

An effective personal, social, health and citizenship programme is in place that successfully boosts students' self-worth. Students are taught sex education and the importance of healthy eating and personal hygiene. An important strength is the life skills programme, which develops students' cookery, money management, communication and social skills effectively. The preparation for working life element successfully prepares students for the next stage of their education or employment by helping them to write suitable curriculum vitae and job applications. Appropriate careers guidance is provided and students undertake enterprise work which improves their business acumen and awareness of the world of work. Work experience is not currently provided, although some individuals would benefit from it. A suitable range

of visits and visitors enrich provision and some individuals have a residential trip in conjunction with a local university.

Teaching and assessment are good. Provision enables students to make good progress academically and in their personal development. A good range of internal and external assessment procedures are in place. Lesson planning is good and effective use is made of assessment information, particularly prior attainment data, to pitch work at the right level. Staff have high expectations and they set tasks with an appropriate level of challenge. Teachers and their assistants provide very effective one-to-one support to ensure students' individual needs and the objectives set in their statements are met. Relationships between staff and students are excellent and this means learning is conducted in a very positive climate. There are sufficient resources and staff have produced some good home-made materials to stimulate learning. However, students in the main school do not have ready access to computers in classrooms, although there are a small number in the computer suite.

While teaching is effective there are occasions when staff do not provide enough opportunities for students to discuss their learning with others and share their knowledge to further develop their thinking. At times individuals do not work at a good pace or lack effort and staff do not always spot these things early enough. Work scrutiny reveals that while most students' writing skills are developing well but their spelling and handwriting skills are often weak. The school lacks a spelling policy to provide guidance as to how spelling improvements can be brought about. While students' attainment is appropriately monitored, the tracking of students' progress is underdeveloped.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students enjoy school and like the firm boundaries and clear routines. They speak highly of the provision and report that they get good support. One student commented, 'Staff are very helpful. They work hard and respect us.' Another said, 'Staff want us to do well here.'

Behaviour is good and students have very positive attitudes to learning. Students are very respectful of each other and abide by school rules. Attendance is satisfactory with a number of individuals attending school regularly for the first time. Relationships between staff and students, and among the students themselves, are excellent. Praise and encouragement effectively develop students' self-confidence. Staff are calm and sensitive in their dealings with students and meet their various personal and academic needs very effectively. Students feel safe and secure and are confident to approach a member of staff if they have any concerns or for advice. They value their key worker and the opportunities that are provided to reflect on behaviour, learning and personal matters.

Students' contribution to the school and wider community has improved since the last inspection. For example, each day, students prepare meals for staff and each

other. Students also voice their opinions when they meet with staff to review students' suggestions as to how to improve school life. They make a difference in the wider community by raising money for good causes. Work in religious studies and art is helping them acquire an appreciation of cultural diversity in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony. As a result, staff and students from different backgrounds get on very well. Life skills and careers education effectively prepare students for their next stage of education or employment.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The safeguarding of students' welfare, health and safety is good. Provision enables students to learn effectively in safe and secure premises.

Child protection procedures are robust and all staff, including the designated person, has been suitably trained to fulfil their child protection responsibilities. The school implements safe recruitment procedures and all of the required checks on the suitability of staff and proprietors to work with students have been completed effectively. The very recently updated single central register contains all of the necessary information. At the time of the last inspection, fire safety procedures were not robust enough, and attendance registers were not fully compliant. Weaknesses have been rectified and failed regulations are now met. Satisfactory fire risk assessments are carried out annually. An adequate number of fire drills are undertaken. Attendance registers now record all authorised and unauthorised absence in line with requirements. The first aid policy is satisfactory and there are sufficient first-aiders on both sites. Up until recently, accident reports identified what treatment had been administered but newly introduced forms do not. The school acknowledges the weaknesses and will adopt revised procedures following the inspection.

The staff to student ratio is high and students are very well supervised. Behaviour and anti-bullying policies are implemented effectively and students say that they are free from intimidation. In the modernisation of the premises the school has satisfactorily planned to increase accessibility. It will be drawing up a three-year plan to review the possibility of further improving access to the premises and the curriculum.

The school promotes a healthy lifestyle and students know what constitutes a healthy diet and that exercise keeps people fit and reduces obesity. For example, in a biology lesson a student clearly identified the impact different types of food have on body mass. In a cookery lesson, students knew why they were preparing healthy food and which ingredients would be beneficial or impact adversely on the body.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- consider providing work experience for those students who have the necessary skills and attitudes to benefit from it
- produce and implement a spelling policy to improve students' spelling skills
- improve the tracking of students' progress to determine how well individuals and groups are achieving as they move through the school
- increase the number of computers in Silsoe classrooms to further develop students' research, enquiry and computer skills.

Inspection judgements

Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special		
Date school opened	September 1996		
Age range of pupils	11–17 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 5	Girls: 2	Total: 7
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 7	Girls: 3	Total: 10
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 10	Girls: 1	Total: 11
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 1	Girls: 3	Total: 4
Annual fees (day pupils)	£14,400–£23,040		
Address of school	Building 53, Wrest Park, Silsoe, MK45 4HS		
Telephone number	01525 864961		
Email address	amakolm@ontrackededucation.com		
Headteacher	Andrew Makolm		
Proprietor	On Track Education Services Ltd		