

# Blue Mountain Education

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Alan Lemon
Social care inspector	Caroline Brailsford

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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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.<sup>1, 2</sup>

An inspection of the care provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the national minimum standards for children's homes. This inspection took place at the same time but the full report is published separately on Ofsted's website and should be read in conjunction with this report which covers the educational registration of the school.

## Information about the school

Blue Mountain Education is an independent special school which opened in April 2006. Its aims are to develop students' personal, vocational, and academic skills so that they become sociable, active and valuable members of society. The school is located on the site of one of the children's homes owned by Blue Mountain Homes, which has three further children's homes in the region. The school was last inspected by Ofsted in March 2008. The children's homes are each inspected at different times; the one adjacent to the school was last inspected in November 2010. A further inspection of this home, focusing only on its provision for keeping children safe, took place at the same time as the inspection of the school.

The school provides for up to five young people from the four homes who are not already attending mainstream secondary schools or, being over 16 years old, going to college. There is a small farm on site managed by the children's home and used by students for rearing goats, rabbits, chickens and guinea pigs, and growing vegetables.

There are five students on roll, three boys and two girls, aged between 15 and 16 years old, none of whom are accommodated at the adjacent children's home. At present, three of these students are attending the school, two of whom are on part-time arrangements. One student has a statement of special educational needs identifying an attention deficit hyperactive disorder.

A teacher-in-charge who was appointed in March 2009 resigned in October 2010. The teaching assistant is on maternity leave. There is a temporary qualified teacher-in-charge and teaching assistant, both seconded from the care staff.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

## Evaluation of the school

The quality of education is inadequate and has not improved since the last inspection. Too many regulations, particularly in relation to the quality of education, are not met. The curriculum is not planned or implemented effectively. Teaching and assessment are inadequate because lessons are not planned well enough to promote learning. Student's progress is inadequate as a result. The arrangements for safeguarding students are satisfactory.

### Quality of education

The curriculum is inadequate as the lack of strong leadership has prevented the drive for improvement. The curriculum is not implemented effectively because the work and activities for students, including their literacy and numeracy, are not planned adequately. The schemes of work to hand are few and they are not developed sufficiently to secure a programme of effective learning and continuous progress. Students' current work draws almost entirely upon the Assessment and Qualifications Authority's unit awards. While the tasks provided by these awards have the potential for a planned and challenging programme of learning activities, they are not organised as such. Tasks are neither linked to students' capabilities nor joined coherently as a scheme of work. The requirements set out in statements of special educational needs are not given sufficient consideration and, more generally, any deficiencies students may have in literacy and numeracy are not identified and dealt with.

Piecemeal planning has meant that the curriculum lacks breadth and does not include all of the required areas of learning, science in particular, but all areas lack sufficient depth of study. Personal, social and health education is not a coherent programme and is only touched upon superficially in school. This shortcoming is offset to an extent by the work in the children's homes on independence, life skills, keeping safe and being healthy. While not set out in detailed planning, farm activities succeed in engaging students in a wide range of productive work looking after livestock and farm produce, such as selling eggs and providing fresh vegetables to the homes. The interest and enjoyment created has led several students to deciding to go to college and take courses in animal care and horticulture. However, lack of progress in general, and in literacy and numeracy in particular, means that students are not being prepared well in school for the future.

All but one of the students on roll do not have a full-time education and, while there are extenuating reasons for this, insufficient regard is paid to ways of ensuring that students' education continues when they are not at school.

Based upon lessons seen and the scrutiny of students' work, teaching and assessment are inadequate. There is too little consideration of students' prior attainments, capabilities and special educational needs in planning lessons and there is no satisfactory means of setting targets and tracking progress. Students make inadequate progress because learning is not promoted effectively due to the

shortcoming of the curriculum and weaknesses in planning lessons. The guidance accompanying unit awards is not translated into clear and manageable learning objectives. Not enough thought is given achieving objectives through making lessons engaging and enjoyable. This includes thoughts about how resources might enliven learning and ensure students are challenged by their work. Classroom resources are inadequate. The exception is when the computer is used to develop skills in the use of programs. The practical nature of learning in this instance made it meaningful for students as do the farm activities.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is satisfactory. The positive relationship between staff and students in school supports students' willingness to cooperate and meet expectations. As a result, students' behaviour is satisfactory. The care staff from students' homes, who bring them to school, ensure that they attend, are punctual and have a good start to the day. Students express positive views of school which is based upon their relationships and the activities they enjoy. Most discover new interests and make a positive contribution to managing the farm and caring for the livestock. Often, this experience guides choices of work experience, future training and college courses. Activities in their homes, developing life skills and independence together with the few unit awards for citizenship, help students to improve their knowledge of public institutions and services. They gain satisfactorily in terms of cultural development, including an awareness of other peoples, from the curriculum and homes. Students have a positive regard for others of different heritages and beliefs.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

The arrangements for students' welfare, health and safety are satisfactory. A comprehensive range of policies and procedures are in place. Given the vulnerability of most students, child protection arrangements have a high profile, are robust and serve to keep students safe. Home managers are instrumental in ensuring that policy and procedures are being effectively implemented. While procedures for safer recruitment of staff are in place, occasionally references obtained on new appointees provide very little detail from previous employment and on their character. Students are well cared for by staff who are concerned to form positive and supportive relationships with each student. This links strongly to the ethos shared by homes and school and encourages students to behave. Bullying is virtually non-existent and is dealt with effectively as a result of a robust anti-bullying policy. Visits away from school are carefully prepared, adequately staffed and risks are assessed.

The school has an attendance register that does not comply with the regulations because it does not contain gender, name and address of parents; name and address of last school attended.

The school has not drawn up a three-year plan in order to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended).

### **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

All of the checks required on the suitability of staff and the proprietor have been carried out as a result of well-implemented procedures. The recording of these checks in a single central register is inadequate as the requirements for a register are not clearly understood.

### **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The school's demountable building in the grounds of the children's home provides adequate accommodation for five students. The building is in good condition and repair. It is secure and has all of the safety features, which are up-to-date, in relation to fire risks and use of electrical equipment. The grounds available to the school are substantial and include a well-maintained farm. This comprises of outbuildings, which are in sound structural repair, and several securely fenced paddocks for livestock. There are raised beds and a polytunnel where students grow plants and vegetable.

### **Provision of information**

The school has not published any discrete information such as in a prospectus. Information for parents, carers and others is published and distributed in the statement of purpose for each of the children's homes. This provides a limited amount of information about the school and some of the regulations are not met as a result. The school's address, telephone number and the name of the teacher-in-charge are not included in the information provided. There is no indication that information is available on request to parents, carers and others in regard to the school's educational and welfare provision for statemented students and those with English as an additional language, student's academic performance in the preceding year. Parents and carers not are supplied with a copy of the school's safeguarding policy, as is required.

### **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

All but one regulation is met. The complaints procedure does not state specifically that correspondence, statements and records of complaints are to be kept confidential.

The care provision was judged to be good, and national minimum standards are met. A full report on the care provision is available on Ofsted's website and should be viewed in conjunction with this report.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.<sup>3</sup> )

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the quality of education provided (standards in part 1) and must:

- ensure that the curriculum policy is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, and implement it effectively (paragraph 2(1))
- provide a curriculum which gives students a full time education with experience in the scientific area of learning (paragraph 2(2)(a))
- ensure the curriculum enables students to acquire skills in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy (paragraph 2(2)(c))
- where students have a statement of special educational needs, ensure that the education provided fulfil its requirements (paragraph 2(2)(e))
- plan and provide personal, social and health education which reflects the school's aims and ethos (paragraph 2(2)(f))
- implement a curriculum which provides the opportunity for all students to learn and make progress (paragraph 2(2)(i))
- ensure that the curriculum provides adequate preparation of students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life (paragraph 2(2)(j))
- improve teaching to enable students to acquire new knowledge and make progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught (paragraph 3(a))
- encourage pupils to apply intellectual, physical or creative effort and to show interest in their work and to think and learn for themselves (paragraph 3(b))
- ensure that lessons are well planned using effective teaching methods and suitable activities (paragraph 3(c))
- develop a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensure that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraph 3(d))

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<sup>3</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made)

- ensure that classroom resources of an adequate quality, quantity and range and are used effectively (paragraph 3(f))
- develop a framework to assess students' work regularly and thoroughly, and utilise such assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress (paragraph 3(g))
- put in place a framework by which student performance can be evaluated by reference to either the school's own aims, as provided to parents, and/or by national norms (paragraph 4)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

- ensure that the admission register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 17).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors (standards in part 4) and must:

- for each member of staff appointed on or **after** 1 May 2007, complete a register to show that the following checks were made, including the date on which each check was completed or the certificate obtained:
  - the person's identity
  - the person is not barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (ISA barred list), or there is no direction made under section 142 of the 2002 Act in respect of that person (List 99), or disqualification prohibition or restriction having the same effect
  - of relevant qualifications, if appropriate
    - whether an enhanced criminal records bureau (CRB) certificate was obtained (paragraph 22(3)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- ensure that the following information has been provided to parents, parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate:
  - the school's address and telephone number and the name of the headteacher (paragraph 24(1)(a))
- make the following information available to parents, parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate:



- particulars of educational and welfare provision for students with statements of special educational needs and for students for whom English is an additional language
- particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations
- the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 24(1)(b)).
- publish on its website or, where no such website exists, send to parents of students (and of prospective students on request) a copy of their safeguarding children policy as required under part 3, paragraph 7 (paragraph 24(1)(c)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the manner in which complaints are to be handled (standards in part 7) and must:

- ensure that the procedures provide that correspondence, statements and records of complaints are to be kept confidential (paragraph 25(k)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001, the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

Please see the report on Ofsted's website relating to the care provision in the children's home which should be read in conjunction with this report.

## 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

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Special School		
<b>Date school opened</b>	7 April 2006		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	8–16		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 2	Girls: 2	Total: 4
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 3	Girls: 2	Total: 5
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£25,000		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Robert Fleming (acting teacher-in-charge)		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Pradeep Manaktala		