

KWS Educational Services, Bedford

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	David Young

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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}

Information about the school

KWS Education Services is registered to provide education for students in the age range 11 to 16 years. The school opened in September 2010 on its present site in Bedford. There are currently 12 full-time students and 20 part-time students on roll who are placed at the school by three local authorities or directly by local schools. Nine students have statements of special educational needs for behavioural and social difficulties. This is the school's first full Ofsted inspection.

KWS aims to make 'alternative provision for challenging young people at risk of exclusion from statutory education. KWS strives to promote and support the physical, emotional and social well-being of young people who are disaffected or disengaged from education or society'.

Evaluation of the school

KWS Bedford provides a good quality of education for its students and in a short time has demonstrated its ability to re-engage students who have not succeeded in previous educational settings. The satisfactory curriculum is reviewed regularly and developed in response to the wide-ranging needs of the students. Good teaching and assessment procedures enable the students to make good progress in academic and vocational areas of learning. Arrangements for the personal development of students are satisfactory and good provision is made for their safeguarding and welfare. The school meets all the regulatory requirements for registration and places a high priority on continuous improvement.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. The school has made a good start with the teaching of a range of National Curriculum subjects supplemented by rewarding vocational activities. The majority of students are in Years 9 to 11 on entry to the school, although a small number join in Years 7 or 8. Good provision is made for all students to develop their skills in literacy and numeracy. All of the students have had unsuccessful educational experiences in previous schools and many have missed significant periods of schooling. On entry to KWS the reading ages and functional skills of the vast majority are well below expectations for their ages. Students are

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

provided with appropriate opportunities to study for accreditation in unit awards or adult literacy and numeracy. The small number of full-time students in the school's first Year 11 have also been entered for GCSE examinations in English and mathematics, together with Level 1 accreditation in beauty or motor vehicle studies. Grades ranging from D to B have already been achieved in functional skills speaking and listening examinations. All students study an adequate breadth of courses in science, drama, physical education, design and technology, and art. Successful project work in history and geography in Key Stage 3 is currently being enhanced to include these subjects as discrete experiences with effect from the second half of the current term. The practical aspects of the curriculum are particularly valued by students. Students have produced good quality artefacts in design and technology and are about to embark on the production of clocks. A well-attended after-school cookery club provides the opportunity for students to develop their social skills working alongside adults, and to learn practical skills of value in their home lives. Well-advanced plans are in place for the systematic development of physical education working in conjunction with a local external provider. Planning for the curriculum consists of suitable long-term overviews of the subjects studied, together with detailed lesson plans identifying learning objectives, activities and approaches to assessment. Plans are in place to produce medium-term plans to a consistent format for all subjects in the renewed curriculum. Part-time students are accommodated alongside their full-time peers and demonstrate satisfactory success, particularly in the vocational areas of study. Provision for part-time students is not sufficiently coherent at present, with a lack of clarity about the intended outcomes and available opportunities for accreditation. Careers advice and individual careers interviews are provided by the local Connexions service; students value the support provided to assist them in planning for the future.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Teachers have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in students' previous achievement and the individual barriers to their learning. Continuous assessment using National Curriculum levels has been introduced recently, alongside regularly updated assessment of students' functional skills. Assessment data are already beginning to provide evidence of progress, enabling teachers to set targets for students' individual future learning. Much of the work is set at appropriate levels to build on students' prior attainment and students respond well to the opportunity to learn at a rate and standard appropriate to their individual needs. Students demonstrate the ability to sustain their concentration and to participate appropriately in both oral and written tasks. Occasionally, there are lapses in concentration and attempts to avoid challenging activities. However, teachers and teaching assistants are skilled in re-engaging students and ensuring that their behaviour does not become disruptive. The activities presented in whole-class teaching sessions do not always provide sufficient challenge for higher-attaining students. Support for students with statements of special educational needs is good with opportunities for one-to-one teaching and regular in-class support, which ensure an appropriate focus on the targets in their individual education plans. Teaching in the vocational courses is well planned and follows an appropriate structure to enable students to complete unit awards with the potential to achieve awards, certificates and diplomas in their

chosen areas of study. There is evidence of good progress among students on these relatively new courses and a number of them express the desire to gain employment in the same skill sector or to continue their studies at college.

There is evidence of good progress in functional skills and accredited learning for the majority of students in both Key Stages 3 and 4. This represents good achievement in the light of their varied starting points and attitudes to previous learning.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Students, on entry to the school, display significant features of disaffection and negative attitudes to learning. In a short time KWS has established a welcoming ethos which seeks to re-engage students, raise their self-esteem and enable them to prepare for successful lives within the community. A large majority of students who returned a questionnaire state that they enjoy school, and all believe that staff care about them and take account of their views. One student wrote, 'Since I've been here I have changed a lot in a good way'. Similarly, one parent wrote, 'This is the best school for my son, he is a lot happier and is willing to go to school every day'. The school council plays an important part in contributing to all aspects of school development and students' views are encouraged and welcomed. Pastoral support plans have been introduced recently for all full-time students and are being extended to part-time students. These are providing a valuable vehicle for discussion with students and with external support agencies, resulting in agreed targets which are enabling students to take the steps which are required to integrate successfully into the school community. Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are satisfactory overall, and for many students are good. For most, this represents a good improvement from their involvement in education previously, as does their attendance.

Students make an important contribution to the life of the school through the school council and learn about local democratic processes through the voting arrangements. Good relationships exist with the local police and fire services and visits to the school are regular. Students have taken an active part in raising money for charitable causes through the sale of cakes to members of the local community. They have also developed good links with the local disability day centre, including the provision of beauty treatments by some of the students. Students' social skills are developed, together with curriculum enhancement, through external visits such as those to the Imperial War Museum and Science Museum. A visit to a restaurant to sample international cuisine formed a successful part of an international project for students. Students' awareness of diversity in the community is enhanced through a variety of themes covered in the personal, social, health and citizenship programme.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school's provision for the welfare, health and safety of students is good. Arrangements for the recruitment of staff are thorough, as are the regular checks on all aspects of fire safety. The school has appropriate policies for the management of

behaviour, anti-bullying and child protection. These are implemented effectively with all appropriate records maintained diligently. All staff, including the designated person, have received recent training in child protection at the required levels. The school maintains regular and effective contact with a range of external services which contribute to the well-being of students. Students report that they feel safe in school and that the school helps them to be healthy. Recent discussions about lunch boxes have contributed to students' awareness of healthy eating. The supervision of students is appropriate with particularly effective arrangements in place at lunchtime during which staff and students eat and relax together in a mature environment. The school has an appropriate plan in place to increase access to the premises, the curriculum and information.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

All the required checks on the suitability of staff and proprietors are in place and recorded in a suitable single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school is located in two buildings on a relatively quiet trading estate. The premises have been developed appropriately to provide good-sized teaching spaces and well-fitted workshops, together with suitable toilets, a kitchen and office space. The accommodation is appropriate for the various learning activities provided, and reflects the expectations of an adult working environment.

Provision of information

Information provided for parents and carers is up to date and meets the regulatory requirements. Parents and carers are contacted on a daily basis as staff are committed to maintaining a continuous dialogue about successes and concerns. Parents and carers are fully involved in the variety of social and educational reviews which take place. They are informed of the progress which students are making through termly reports and further reports at the end of the year, or on completion of the student's placement at the school.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has appropriate procedures for the management of any complaints and these are communicated to parents and carers.

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:

- develop a consistent approach to medium-term planning for all subjects of the curriculum
- review arrangements for part-time students to ensure they experience a coherent, accredited curriculum
- ensure that lessons consistently include extension or alternative learning activities for higher achieving students.

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	Alternative provision for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
Date school opened	September 2010
Age range of pupils	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 7 Girls: 5 Total: 12
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 10 Girls: 10 Total: 20
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 5 Girls: 4 Total: 9
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 2 Girls: 3 Total: 5
Annual fees (day pupils)	£16,000 (for full-time students)
Address of school	23-25 and 51 Brunel Rd, Bedford, MK41 9TJ
Telephone number	01234 358638
Email address	info@xers.co.uk
Headteacher	Sarah Nichols-Weaver
Proprietor	Karl Weaver