

Young Options Pathway College Stoke

Independent school standard inspection report

DfE registration number	861/6004
Unique Reference Number (URN)	136220
Inspection number	366891
Inspection dates	22–23 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Mark Mumby HMI

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

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

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No. 090070

© Crown copyright 2011



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

Young Options Pathway College provides education for boys and girls aged from 14 to 19 years. The school is mainly for students who have behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. The school is located in a residential area of Longton, near Stoke-on-Trent. It is registered for 15 students. There are currently five full-time students on roll, three of whom have a statement of special educational needs. The school is owned by The Options Group. It opened in September 2010 and this is the first published inspection report by Ofsted.

The school's main aim is to prepare students, both educationally and pastorally, to make a positive contribution to society and enjoy purposeful lives. It aims to support students to be educated within the community, partly at the school and partly at local colleges and to undertake a variety of vocational and academic courses, either on or off the site.

Evaluation of the school

This newly established school provides a good quality of education and meets its aims well. The school pays particularly good attention to meeting the individual needs of students and preparing them well for their future well-being. Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good and safeguarding procedures are robust. The school meets all but two of the regulations for registration as an independent school.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. The school has prepared a clear curriculum policy which is supplemented by a comprehensive range of documentation including schemes of work leading to recognised qualifications. The curriculum is planned specifically to create a personal learning journey for each student. Where a student has a statement of special educational needs, this is taken into account in the planning. There is a strong emphasis on the development of basic skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). This is through discrete teaching of the subjects as well as the good use of cross-curricular opportunities. The high level of staffing ensures that students receive a large amount

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

of attention and this helps to develop their speaking and listening skills. The school offers 14–19 diploma routes in hair and beauty, creative and media, hospitality, and public services. These options provide students with clear vocational routes which are linked to career pathways. All students benefit from good quality careers guidance and periods of work experience. In addition, students are able to take entry level qualifications and National Vocational Qualifications. GCSEs are available in history, geography, religious education and art. Partnership arrangements, with one of the company's other schools, extend this range to include science. Personal, social and health education are covered well through the school's life skills programme which includes health, social skills, finance, careers, travel, society, first aid and food hygiene. Individual projects help students to develop their skills to plan, research and evaluate. All students participate in physical education lessons at a local sports centre. The curriculum is enriched further through good partnership arrangements, including links with a city farm, equine stables and the local police and fire services.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Lessons are planned well to meet the interests and needs of individual students. This is because comprehensive assessment and induction arrangements ensure that staff have a very good understanding of the needs of each student from the outset. Teachers then use their good, and frequently excellent, subject knowledge to plan learning activities for the students. Continuous assessment and a thorough understanding of students' personal needs and circumstances enable staff to respond to students' changing needs well. This is, in part, due to the very good communication within the staff team and also with the parents and carers of the students. Teaching is very focused, with almost all lessons being delivered on a one-to-one basis. This strategy is successful in ensuring that no time is wasted and a good pace of learning is maintained. As a result, students make consistently good progress in their learning.

Relationships between staff and students are excellent. There is a good level of communication between the teachers and the students. Teachers use questioning well to continuously assess learning and to challenge thinking. In the most successful lessons, the students themselves also ask questions of the teachers to check their own understanding or for reassurance. On rare occasions, the intense nature of the one-to-one tuition results in students not having sufficient time to think for themselves or to work independently for a sustained period. On these occasions, teachers occasionally provide too much guidance or answer their own questions. Opportunities are occasionally missed to help students to develop their problem-solving strategies, such as in mathematics. There is a good level of resourcing in the school and ICT is used well both as a teaching tool and to develop students' own skills.

Initial assessments in English, mathematics, ICT and science form part of the two-week induction at the start of each student's placement. These assessments are matched to National Curriculum levels and are followed up with monthly assessments to measure progress and set new targets. This process is used well to inform planning as well as contributing to the twice-daily tutorials for each student.

Assessments also include a well-being element which allows students to explore their feelings and helps staff to work with students in their tutorial meetings.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They say they enjoy school and appreciate the understanding the staff have for their particular needs. As a result, although attendance levels are low, they are a significant improvement on previous placements for most students. They are enthusiastic in lessons, responding well to their teachers and have good attitudes to their learning. The relationships between students and teachers are excellent. Students' behaviour is good. The focus on the development of basic skills coupled with life-skills work and vocational education prepares students well for their future economic well-being. Students have a good understanding about right and wrong, respecting each other and the school environment. In a public services lesson, for example, a student voiced strong views to support human rights and equality of opportunity for others.

The school has an active eco-committee which is led very enthusiastically by one of the students. He has successfully engaged the other students as well as the staff in this work. As a result, the school has already achieved the silver Eco-schools Award and has robust plans in place towards achieving the Green Flag Award. The school's eco-work extends well into the local community through its regeneration work in the grounds of the local church. Students also participate in charity fundraising work and have supported the local community by working at a Christmas meal prepared for older residents. The whole school forum enables students to contribute to the life of the school, for example, by providing input into the school's positive behaviour policy.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good. The school has implemented excellent systems and procedures to ensure the health and safety of students in almost all respects. However, two particular issues have gone unchecked and, consequently, the provision for students' welfare, health and safety is not outstanding. An appropriate fire risk assessment has been prepared by the school's owners and a subsequent check has been carried out by the local fire service. All recommended action has been completed. However, the routine weekly checks on the fire alarm system have not been carried out consistently. The school has taken immediate and appropriate action to address this issue. The school's first aid policy does not include sufficiently detailed guidance for staff, such as when to call an emergency ambulance or how to deal with spillages of bodily fluids. Although the school has three members of staff with basic training in first aid, there is currently no member of staff qualified at the appropriate level. The school has taken immediate action and arranged training for two members of staff. The school's recording of accidents is secure, accidents are investigated and appropriate measures are put in place to prevent any recurrence. Robust and detailed risk assessments have been carried out for individual students, the premises and activities both on and off site.

The required actions are implemented well. Consequently, the school ensures that the students are kept safe. Staff are very well trained to care for the students, both as part of their induction and also through more specific training such as that required for the designated senior member of staff responsible for child protection. There is excellent liaison between the students' parents and carers and the school to ensure that the school meets the students' pastoral needs very well.

The students are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles and respect the school's rules with regard to healthy eating. The school actively supports students to stop smoking and the curriculum includes a comprehensive programme of health education. Students report that they feel safe in school and this view is supported by their parents and carers in the inspection questionnaires.

The school has prepared a three-year accessibility plan as required by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school carries out all of the required checks on its employees and maintains appropriate records of the proprietors and all of the staff who work in the school.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school is housed in former office premises which have been completely refurbished to meet the needs of the school. This work has been carried out appropriately to provide suitable teaching areas including a range of specialist facilities. Students benefit from purpose-designed rooms for art, hair and beauty, and ICT. The premises are in an excellent state of repair, decoration and cleanliness. The outdoor area is currently not suitable for play or recreation. However, the school has already begun planning work with the students to address this shortcoming. Physical education takes place off-site at a local sports centre.

Provision of information

The school makes all of the required information available to parents and carers through its prospectus and website. Parents and carers are provided with detailed information about the progress and attainment of their children through written reports which are sent out annually with additional reports as required.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a clearly written complaints procedure which meets requirements.

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.³

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

- prepare and implement a suitable written policy on first aid (paragraph 14).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises of and accommodation at schools (standards in part 5) and must:

- provide outside space for students to play safely (paragraph 23(s)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following point for development.

- Provide more opportunities for students to work independently and participate in activities which encourage them to think and take risks.

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

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
-------------	------	--------------	------------

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		✓		
--	--	---	--	--

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Specialist behavioural , social and emotional difficulties (BESD)		
Date school opened	September 2010		
Age range of pupils	14-19		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 4	Girls: 1	Total: 5
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 3	Girls: 0	Total: 3
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 1	Girls: 1	Total: 2
Annual fees (day pupils)	£65,000		
Address of school	Phoenix House Marlborough Road Longton Stoke on Trent ST3 1EJ		
Telephone number	01782 331585		
Email address	mel.callaghan@optionsgroup.co.uk		
Headteacher	Ms Mel Callaghan		
Proprietor	Tommy Macdonald Milner		