

Blue Mountain Education

Independent school progress monitoring inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Frank Price

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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 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

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 provides for up to five young people from the homes aged eight to 16 years, who are not already attending mainstream secondary schools. At present, three students attend the school, one of whom is part-time, with the placement being split between the school and local further education college. One student has a statement of special educational needs identifying an attention deficit hyperactive disorder and autistic spectrum disorder. A teacher-in-charge was appointed in January 2011.

Context of the inspection

When the school was last inspected, in January 2011, it failed to meet a number of regulations relating to the curriculum; teaching and assessment; the welfare, health and safety of students; proper checks of staff; provision of information and the complaints procedures. An action plan was submitted in May 2011. This was judged unsatisfactory. This inspection was the first visit to follow up the progress that the school has made in implementing the latest action plan. Two pupils failed to attend the school on the date of the visit, the other pupil was attending the local further education college.

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

At the time of the last inspection, planning and schemes of work in general were underdeveloped. The action plan was not clear and specific on how the school had improved the curriculum to meet the regulations. While schemes of work now exist for the subjects taught, the planning they contain is still inadequate. For example, planning for English does not cover important elements of the subject such as speaking and listening, writing and reading for a variety of purposes. The planning for mathematics concentrates on number and does not cover shape, space and measure or using and applying number in sufficient depth.

At the time of the last inspection, not all pupils were provided with a full-time education and not all of the required areas of learning were represented in the work and activities offered by the school. The action plan set out to provide a broader curriculum. The school's planning remains inadequate and this, together with a continuing poor range of resources, means that coverage of all the required the areas of learning is insufficient. The curriculum sets out to provide for full time education. However, pupils' attendance is so poor that they do not access sufficient hours of education. Planning for literacy and numeracy linked to the assessment of each pupil's basic skills was not in place at the previous inspection. The action plan identified that basic skills were being met by the revised syllabus the school had put into place. However, continuing weaknesses in curriculum planning for literacy and numeracy mean that pupils are not able to acquire skills in these basic areas in sufficient depth or breadth.

The previous inspection noted that the school's efforts to meet the requirements of pupils' statements were insufficient to meets pupils' needs effectively. The school indicated in its action plan that it would meet this requirement through the review of pupils' individual education plans. This visit found that individual education plans for all pupils are poor and do not relate to the statement or the pupil's annual reviews. There is no link between the statement which identifies needs and what is offered on a daily basis.

The inspection noted that pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) was not developed sufficiently. The action plan indicated this had now been addressed. However, the inspection found that the scheme of work for PSHE, while covering some relevant aspects such as personal finance, ignores other key areas such as sex education, substance misuse and how to keep safe and healthy.

The previous inspection judged pupils' progress to be inadequate and they were not prepared well enough for the future as a result of the many shortcomings in the curriculum. The action plan claimed that this had now been addressed through more comprehensive planning and effective implementation. However, the weak planning of the curriculum and poor attendance of the pupils adversely affects their progress and preparation for the future; these remain inadequate.

At the last inspection, teaching was not effective in promoting learning and progress and the pace of learning were too slow. The action plan stated that through the introduction of a broader curriculum, a review of teaching methods, and improved assessment, teaching has been made livelier and effective in increasing pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. While it was not possible to observe teaching, due to pupils failing to attend the school on the date of the visit, scrutiny of pupils' work, assessment records and planning, indicate that teaching is not enabling pupils to make progress at a sufficient rate. Samples of pupils' work demonstrate that much of the work consists largely of completing worksheets for assessment, indicating that teaching is still too mundane. Existing planning for lessons does not show what methods or activities are to be used to engage pupils effectively. Classroom

resources were very limited at the last inspection. The action plan indicated that additional resources have been acquired. There have been some improvements in resources. However, they are still too limited in variety and quality to support effective learning, particularly for reading.

The assessment procedures in place at the time of the last inspection lacked thoroughness and there was no system in place to measure, track or analyse students' progress. The action plan stated that assessment has been improved, but lacked detail of how this had been achieved. Assessment is mainly through recording completion of syllabus modules and this shows coverage of work. However, the link between assessment and teaching is too weak. For example, initial assessments in literacy and numeracy have only recently been carried out on a termly basis. Scrutiny of these assessments at the time of the visit, indicated a deterioration since the last assessment, but this had not been picked up by the school or addressed in the planning of lessons. There is insufficient analysis of pupils' progress to identify strengths and weaknesses and to inform future teaching.

At the time of the last inspection, the admission register was not maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations. The single central record was incomplete, as qualification checks were not recorded. The action plan confirmed that suitability checks were carried out at recruitment and that registers contained the required information. The admissions register does now contain the relevant information and meets requirements. The single central record of staff checks indicates that qualifications have been checked and recorded and it meets regulations.

Published information about the details of the school and other information to be made available for parents, carers and others were omitted. The complaints procedure did not provide that correspondence, statements and records of complaints were to be kept confidential. The missing information is now contained in the school prospectus and the complaints procedure now meets regulations. The school's accessibility plan as required by the Equality Act 2010 is inadequate.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

As a result of this inspection, the school must take action to meet The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010¹ ('the Regulations'), as follows:

- 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 pupils of compulsory school age experience in the following areas of learning: linguistic, mathematical,

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made

scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative (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))
- 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)
- in order to comply with the Equality Act 2010, the school should prepare a three-year plan to improve accessibility.

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special school for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties		
Date school opened	April 2006		
Age range of pupils	8 to 16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys:	Girls: 2	Total: 2
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 1	Girls: 2	Total: 3
Annual fees (day pupils)	£11,400 to £19,000		
Address of school	Willow Farm Off Newton Lane Cossall NG16 2SD		
Telephone number	0115 9321153		
Email address	bluemountaineducation@btconnect.com		
Headteacher	Robert Flemming		
Proprietor	Pradeep Manaktala		