

The Education Centre

Independent special school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Mike Thirkell

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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

The Education Centre is an independent special day school for boys and girls aged 12 to 16 who have significant behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. All students are local authority funded and each has a statement of special educational needs. There are currently 28 students on roll. The Education Centre opened in Haywards Heath in 1991 and moved to its present site in a newly refurbished office building in September 2011. Its core aim is 'to create a place where everyone feels valued and can achieve their potential'. The school was last inspected in 2008.

Evaluation of the school

The quality of education is good. The school has made good progress since its last inspection and meets its aims. It provides a good curriculum which meets students' individual learning and emotional needs. Students make good progress, supported by careful and regular monitoring. Teaching is good and students unanimously appreciate the support they receive from staff. Procedures for safeguarding students are thorough and students are well cared for. The school meets all but two of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. The school provides a broad range of subjects which meets the students' learning needs successfully and supports them in making good progress. The range of subjects reflects the school's aim of creating a place where 'skills and talents are encouraged and developed'. Provision is planned to meet students' individual learning and personal needs and to respond flexibly to changing circumstances, linked, for example, to students' emotional response. Vocational subjects, in particular art, woodwork and cookery, are popular with students; all students take turns enthusiastically to help cook school lunches. Facilities for science have been improved since the last inspection. Students enjoy the wide range of opportunities for physical education and games, supported by regular visits to a local sports centre. The school integrates successfully literacy and numeracy in vocational activities, as well as through English and mathematics lessons, which encourages students to respond positively. Interaction and discussion

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

between staff and students throughout the school day provide effective support to the development of their speaking and listening skills. Careers education is given prominence in the curriculum and students normally have a period of work experience in Year 11. The curriculum is supported by schemes of work for each subject although some schemes do not make sufficient reference to teaching methodology.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. The quality of teaching observed was never less than satisfactory and was often outstanding, most notably in vocational subjects, including art. Teachers work hard and the students appreciate the support that they provide. They plan lessons carefully to meet students' individual needs and employ good strategies for managing behaviour. Students say they recognise that learning in lessons is structured carefully. Lesson planning reflects teachers' good knowledge of their students' learning and emotional needs. Students respond well to their teachers' high expectations for behaviour and learning. Lessons are typified by positive relationships and discussions.

Strategies for monitoring and assessing students' academic and personal progress are good. When students enter the school, reviews of referral documents and statements of special need are used to prepare individual timetables. Daily assessments in each subject refer to a student's attendance, behaviour and approaches to work, as well as to academic progress. Along with summative assessments, which are recorded each week, these support the early identification of difficulties. A mentoring system provided by staff ensures a regular and flexible response to students' emotional needs as well as regular reviews of their academic progress. This system is highly valued by students. Formal feedback to parents and carers about students' progress is provided each half term. The school's policy and procedures for assessment reflect significant progress since the last inspection, although the school is aware that further development is still needed to ensure fully consistent practice.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school's provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Student questionnaires completed for the inspection confirm that they enjoy being at the school. Spiritual development is good. Students often enter the school with very low self-esteem. They grow in confidence and develop in understanding of their feelings because all staff are willing to listen, mentor and support students whatever their difficulties.

Moral development is good. Staff have high expectations of behaviour and, although they sometimes struggle to behave well, students understand right from wrong. Staff provide excellent role models and students learn to value the ethos of mutual respect which permeates every aspect of school life. Their moral understanding is successfully developed through personal, social and health education (PSHE) and visitors to the school, for example, former prisoners. Students show respect for

adults and property. The high quality artwork, which is displayed throughout the school, is not defaced or damaged in any way.

Students' social development is good. Relationships in school are strong and students work well together in lessons and socialise well at breaks. Lunchtime is particularly well used as a time when the whole school community comes together to eat, chat and play pool, for example. Other cultures are celebrated effectively, as in art where students were challenged to express their understanding of the term 'culture'. However, the school recognises the need to develop further students' knowledge of the diversity of the United Kingdom. Students develop an understanding of public services, for example through visits to major galleries and through the PSHE programme. Overall, students' experiences prepare them well for their future lives.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school makes good provision for the welfare, health and safety of its students. Safeguarding is at the heart of the school's work. The school has prepared a suitable child-protection policy and staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding. Staff are very committed to supporting the well-being and emotional needs of all the students, who value the mentoring which all staff offer them. As one student said, 'I was a very different person when I first arrived at this school.' Good practice is based upon robust policies and effective guidance for staff. There is careful and detailed record keeping for the welfare of students and safer recruitment of staff.

The policy and procedures on promoting good behaviour are effective. There are clear sanctions and rewards and incidents of misbehaviour are dealt with effectively, mainly through discussion of the causes and consequences of the students' actions. The dangers of cyber-bullying are explored in the PSHE programme and the students appreciate the way the school deals effectively with rare incidents of bullying.

The school pays good attention to the health and safety of its students. For example, staff make checks each morning to ensure the building is safe before the students arrive. Procedures for educational visits meet requirements. The school keeps good records in the event of any injury and there is an appropriately trained first aider on site at all times. The PSHE programme effectively promotes healthy living through topics such as substance abuse and sexual health. The school makes very good use of outside agencies and specialists to develop students' understanding and support them in managing risk. There are very good opportunities for students to participate in a wide range of sporting activities which meet students' varying needs and interests. All students plan and cook healthy school lunches, as well as trying new foods.

The building is secure and there are good levels of supervision at all times. Attendance is carefully monitored and any unexplained absences are swiftly followed up. When low attendance becomes a concern, the school makes good use of outside

agencies to support students and their families. The school meets the regulations regarding the Equalities Act 2010. There is no evidence of discrimination.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

Appropriate checks are completed of staff and the proprietor and are recorded in a register of checks as required.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school is now established in refurbished buildings which provide a good learning and social environment for students. It is well furnished and enhanced by good display throughout the building. Classrooms are of good size and generally provide positive learning environments. The new accommodation has resolved all the issues identified as inadequate in the last inspection. However, the facilities in the new building provided for students who may become ill during the school day are inadequate because there is no wash basin and no toilet facility sufficiently close by.

Provision of information

The school has not provided parents and carers with the required information. Nor has it made clear what is available on request. This includes details of strategies to prevent and deal with bullying, sanctions applied in case of poor behaviour, the promotion of good behaviour and details of the safeguarding children policy.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The complaints policy meets the requirement in all respects.

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.

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

provide appropriate facilities for students who are ill (paragraph 23(k)).

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

make available to parents of students and prospective parents, policies, information and details of arrangements relating to dealing with bullying, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour, and sanctions adopted in the event of students misbehaving (paragraph 24(1)(b))

provide parents of students and prospective parents with details of the school's safeguarding children policy on request (paragraph 24(1)(c)).

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 teaching materials and opportunities to support the further development of students' knowledge of the diversity of the United Kingdom.

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	1990		
Age range of pupils	12–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 24	Girls: 4	Total: 28
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 24	Girls: 4	Total: 28
Annual fees (day pupils)	£21,300		
Email address	the_education_centre@yahoo.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Nigel Roles		
Proprietor	Mr Will Astill		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.

7th November, 2011

Dear Students



Inspection of The Education Centre

I was pleased to meet many of you when I visited your school recently. My colleague and I particularly appreciated the opportunity to meet a number of you in groups to discuss specific issues about your education and care. I am happy to be able to say that the inspectors agreed with the positive views you expressed about the good quality of education and care that you receive.

We found that your lessons were good and that the school takes care to ensure that all matters relating to your welfare, security, health and safety are dealt with appropriately. The inspectors were particularly struck by your unanimous appreciation of your teachers and the time that they give to supporting you in making progress. A number of you emphasised how much progress you had made since joining the school. We thought that your behaviour during the inspection was good.

The inspection found that:

- the curriculum is good;
- teaching and assessment are good;
- welfare, health and safety are good;
- spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good.

The school has one or two things to put in place. These are to let parents and carers know that certain policies and information are available to them including the school's child-protection policy. Finally, the school needs to improve the facilities provided for any of you who may be ill during the school day.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Thirkell
Lead Inspector