

Blue Mountain Education

Independent school progress monitoring inspection report

DfE registration number	891/6026
Unique Reference Number (URN)	131536
Inspection number	388158
Inspection dates	3 February 2012
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.^{1,2}

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 four further children's homes in the region. The school provides for up to five young people from the homes aged 12 to 16 years, who are not already attending mainstream secondary schools. At present, three students attend the school for varying periods of time each week in conjunction with attendance at other courses. A teacher-in-charge was appointed in January 2011. An education consultant was appointed in December 2012 to develop the curriculum and to contribute to the provision for specific students.

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

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

Context of the inspection

When the school was 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.

A progress monitoring inspection visit in October 2011 evaluated the progress that the school had made in implementing the action plan. It judged that previously failed regulations related to the welfare, health and safety of students, checks on staff, the provision of information and the complaints policy were now met. Insufficient progress had been made and a number of regulations relating to the curriculum, teaching and assessment remained unmet.

This further progress monitoring inspection visit was arranged to evaluate progress made with the implementation of the action plan with regard to the remaining unmet regulations. On the day of the inspection visit only one lesson, with one student, could be observed.

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

At the time of the last inspection visit in October 2011, planning and schemes of work were underdeveloped; as a result the curriculum was not implemented effectively. Not all of the required areas of learning were represented in the work and activities offered by the school. There was insufficient planning for personal, social and health education (PSHE). The school, in its action plan, stated that a revised curriculum was partly in place and was being developed on an on-going basis. This was described as a broader curriculum which included all the required areas of learning together with additional vocational experiences. However, the plan was not specific enough to demonstrate the extent of curriculum planning and lacked the required detail for the plan to be evaluated. An education consultant was appointed to the staff of the school in December 2011 and is now working with the teacher-in-charge to make a positive impact on the development of the curriculum.

The school is now planning the curriculum through a series of themes, based on the National Curriculum and appropriate external accreditations, implemented on a half-termly basis. A long-term plan, covering all the required areas of experience is in the process of construction. This is further developed into medium-term and lesson plans which provide a clear basis for teaching and learning in the classroom and practical areas of the school. A recently introduced independence training programme, taught in conjunction with the children's homes, provides a tailored programme based on the needs of everyday life and transition to employment or further education. The ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) programme and accreditation has been introduced as one route to accreditation of experiences which are planned to prepare students appropriately for the future. The national

programmes of study for PSHE and citizenship are being mapped against the revised curriculum to ensure sufficient coverage of appropriate content and experiences. Some progress has been made but the regulations are not yet all met as there has been insufficient time since December, when this revised approach to planning was started, to complete the planning for the full curriculum.

At the time of the last inspection visit the curriculum did not have sufficient regard to the requirements in students' statements of special educational needs. Planning for literacy and numeracy linked to the assessment of each student's basic skills was not in place. The curriculum did not prepare students well for the future. The school, in its action plan, stated that the revised curriculum now included appropriate attention to the development of students' basic skills. The action plan further stated that students' individual education plans were regularly reviewed to ensure continuing compliance with their statements of special educational needs. Experiences in speaking and listening, literacy and numeracy are being planned into the revised curriculum for all students. The planning is being mapped against the requirements of the National Curriculum, and of appropriate external accreditations such as functional skills awards. Appropriate account is taken of the strategies required in students' statements of special educational needs. The improvements in planning are ensuring that students' individual learning needs are now central to teaching and learning. As a result, these regulations are now met.

At the time of the last inspection visit, teaching was not effective in promoting sufficient learning and progress. Teaching was often dull and lacking in the variety of experiences to engage students productively. Lessons were too often poorly planned and the pace of lessons was slow. Lessons were driven by tasks rather than students' learning needs which were not understood in sufficient depth. Attendance was poor. As a result of these factors, students made insufficient progress. The school, in its action plan, stated that the quality of teaching would improve and result in improved progress in students' learning as the result of improved planning. The lesson available for observation on the day of this inspection demonstrated improvements in content and teaching. The students have achieved some externally accredited awards within the unit award programme, including literacy and numeracy. There is some evidence in the outcomes from practical lessons in design and technology that students have engaged and made progress in their practical learning. The revisions to the curriculum are providing improved planning and strategies for effective learning. Students' poor attendance continues to undermine the rate at which progress is being made. Improvements have been made, but the school is not able to provide evidence of meeting the requirements for the quality of teaching and assessment in full.

At the time of the last inspection visit, assessment procedures were insufficiently thorough. There was no system in place to measure, track or analyse students' progress. The school's action plan stated that baseline assessment was providing an initial assessment of students' needs and prior attainment. Insufficient detail was provided about proposed strategies for continuous assessment of progress. The baseline assessments are now planned for repeat testing on a half-termly basis to

provide one measure of progress from students' individual starting points. Records of external accreditations achieved are maintained. The use of National Curriculum levels, and the criteria for assessment in externally accredited functional skills programmes, are being mapped against the revised curriculum. However, insufficient progress has been made with the implementation of these revised approaches to assessment and recording of progress. As a result, the regulations related to assessment and recording of progress are not met.

At the time of the last inspection visit classroom resources were very limited and there were few books for reading or reference. Too little consideration was given in planning to the use of a variety of resources. The school's action plan stated that resources had been acquired and were being developed further. As the curriculum has been revised, orders have been placed for additional computers; functional skills textbooks; art and craft materials; reading and reference books; sports equipment; bicycles; scientific calculators and experiment kits. Resources in place or on order, are sufficient for the implementation of the currently planned curriculum. As a result, this regulation is now met.

At the time of the last inspection, the school did not have a three-year plan to increase accessibility. An appropriate three-year plan to increase accessibility to the premises, the curriculum, and to information has now been produced. This plan fulfils the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

As a result of this inspection, the school must take action to meet The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010³ ('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))
- 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))
- 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))

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

- 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 framework to assess students' work regularly and thoroughly, and utilise such assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress (paragraph 3(g)).

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special day school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties		
Date school opened	April 2006		
Age range of pupils	12–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 1	Girls: 1	Total: 2
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	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	bluemountain@btconnect.com		
Teacher in charge	Robert Fleming		
Proprietor	Pradeep Manaktala		