

Continuum School Scarborough

Independent school standard inspection report

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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

Previously known as Farrow House Educational Centre, Continuum School Scarborough is an independent special school for young people with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. It is registered to admit up to 24 students aged from eight to 18 years of age. Part of Continuum Care and Education Limited, the school originally opened in 2003 but relocated to its current site in September 2010. It is located at the edge of an industrial estate to the south of Scarborough. Of the nine boys and one girl on roll, nine have a statement of special educational needs and four are in the care of their local authority. The students come from three local authorities, which fund their places, with three in care homes run by the Continuum group.

The school aims to provide a culture and ethos of inclusion and opportunity for all so that each student feels valued and experiences successes at every opportunity. The school was previously inspected in November 2008.

Evaluation of the school

Continuum School Scarborough provides a good all round education for its students and successfully meets its aims. This is the result of a good curriculum and good teaching which are underpinned by particularly strong relationships between all staff and students. Behaviour management strategies are applied consistently ensuring that students are clear about boundaries and expectations so that behaviour in classes contributes to the good academic progress made by students. Improvements have been made since the previous inspection, notably in the arrangements for the assessment and tracking of students' attainment and progress, which have contributed to improving teaching and assessment. The move to new premises, which provide a dedicated outdoor play space, means that all of the regulations relating to the premises and accommodation are now met. The school meets all of the regulations for independent schools and all safeguarding requirements are met.

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

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

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good overall. Based on the National Curriculum, it is broad and balanced and enriched by a range of interesting activities outside school. At Key Stage 4, students are able to select externally validated vocational and life skills courses, including construction and service industry skills. A strong focus on developing students' basic skills in English and mathematics includes opportunities to extend these skills across the curriculum. For example, in a construction lesson, students had to read instructions and measure, mark and cut lengths of wood. This is helping the majority of students to make good progress. Provision is good for students with a statement of special educational needs, particularly in relation to modifying their behaviour. Individual emotional and behaviour targets are reviewed effectively by students and staff at the end of every lesson.

There is a strong emphasis on preparation for adult life, particularly through the personal, social, citizenship and health curriculum. Good links with the Connexions service help to ensure that, where appropriate, work experience placements are arranged for older students. These links also help to secure further education places when students leave the school. Whole-school sessions at the beginning and end of each day enable students to develop team-working, speaking and listening skills, and to reflect on their attitudes, behaviour and successes in achieving and setting personal targets.

Teaching and assessment are good. Good relationships and high expectations of students' conduct ensure that all students know what is expected of them and result in a very calm and orderly learning environment. Behaviour management strategies are sensitively deployed to minimise disruption to learning. In lessons, there is effective deployment of staff so that students see teachers and teaching assistants as a source of support, challenge and guidance. Teachers' good subject knowledge ensures that explanations and instructions are clear and all students learn the key points intended and make good progress in lessons. Lesson planning is good, routinely identifying learning intentions. The procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress have been improved and assessment information about current achievements is being used more effectively to plan activities that meet students' individual needs. In the best lessons, learning intentions and tasks are tailored to the individual needs of each student. However, on a small number of occasions, assessment information is under-used to provide sufficient challenge and extend the learning of the most able. Students' work is regularly marked to provide praise for their achievements and to identify where further improvements can be made. Although some of these comments are very clear about how work can be improved, the quality and consistency of this practice is variable.

Students' progress is good overall. When students arrive at the school, their attainment is typically well below that expected for their age. In most cases, there are large gaps in each student's learning. For example, on joining the school one Key Stage 3 student lacked a basic knowledge of letters and sounds which limited the student's reading and writing ability. The school's clear focus on the basic skills of

English and mathematics is helping students to make up lost ground. However, in part due to the nature of the students' difficulties, by the time students reach the end of Key Stage 4 their academic attainment, although improved, generally remains below average. Students' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developing well and are contributing to the skills base that could help their future employability. The greatest achievement of most students is the improvement in their attendance and engagement in education.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. A clear emphasis is placed on developing students' good behaviour and improving their attendance. The motto in every classroom for students to 'give respect and get respect' is taken to heart by all students and contributes strongly to improving their personal and social skills. The recent introduction of the weekly 'Challenge Troop', when students take part in team building and outdoor activities, is helping further to promote their social and moral development. The school is extending its scheme for developing students' understanding of their own and other cultures and they have been taught about some world religions and different cultures. Subjects such as dance, art, drama and music contribute well to students' cultural understanding. Although satisfactory overall, students' understanding of the many cultures and faiths in modern Britain is limited and some students occasionally express negative views about people who are different to themselves.

Physical education and sports activities promote students' self-image and develop their confidence effectively. Students learn about English institutions, such as the monarchy and Remembrance Day. In assemblies and at the end of each day, students are encouraged to reflect on their feeling and relationships. They respond well to this. In lessons, students interact well and readily celebrate each other's work. In an English lesson, students listened well and valued each other's arguments for and against allowing mobile phones in school. Students get along well together and enjoy school which is evident in their improving attendance rates and positive attitudes in the majority of lessons. When incidents of misbehaviour occur, timely responses by adults minimise disruption to the learning of others. Consequently, students say they feel safe and well cared for. However, a small number report that occasionally name-calling takes place, and that although staff tackle this as soon as it is reported, it re-occurs from time to time. Detailed individual risk assessments of each student's difficulties provide staff with good guidance to help students to manage their own behaviour as well as strategies to minimise risks or to de-escalate potentially difficult situations. Behaviour management strategies are applied consistently across the school. Consequently, and because students are clear about boundaries and expectations, behaviour is generally good and this contributes significantly to the good progress of students.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Procedures for welfare, health and safety are good. Comprehensive guidance is provided to staff on safeguarding and protecting children and staff from harm. All staff have appropriate child protection training and this is updated regularly. Records confirm that all appropriate recruitment checks on staff are complete and up to date. Alongside consistent behaviour management and anti-bullying policies, this ensures a safe learning and working environment. There are good arrangements for administering first aid by suitably trained staff. Thorough risk assessments are completed for outdoor activities and staff ensure that appropriate safety equipment and first aid are readily available. Arrangements for fire safety are thorough, including detailed risk assessments, regular checks on fire extinguishers and practice evacuations. The school fulfils its responsibilities under the Equalities Act 2010.

Students are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles. Off-site facilities enable all students to take swimming lessons and to take part in a range of physical activities at sports centres. Healthy eating is encouraged and students access fruit snacks at break times and learn to make simple healthy meals in food technology lessons. A drugs awareness agency and the school nurse help students to understand the risks to their personal health and safety associated with substance misuse.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

A single central record of all the required checks is kept up to date and shows clearly that all staff have been subject to an enhanced check by the Criminal Records Bureau and other required checks before they begin work at the school.

Premises and accommodation at the school

Since the previous inspection, the school has relocated to a modern building to the south of Scarborough. The facilities at the site represent a significant improvement to the educational environment including a dedicated outdoor play space for students. On the ground floor, there are offices and a medical room along with well-proportioned rooms used as a kitchen, a technology workshop and a dining and recreation room which is used also for assemblies. On the first floor, there are six suitably sized classrooms, including a library, an ICT suite and an art room. Rooms are well decorated and educational displays provide a good learning environment throughout. There are suitable washroom areas and toilets appropriate to the age range of the students in the school.

Provision of information

The school provides parents, carers and others with all of the required information through the prospectus and a website linked to the Continuum group. This includes information about the aims of the school and the curriculum on offer to students. It includes a copy of the safeguarding and complaints policy and identifies all of the

other policies which may be requested from the school. The school provides parents and carers with a termly written report on the progress of their children.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's procedures for handling complaints are clear and concise and meet all requirements for independent schools.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets all of 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:

- make better use of assessment information in order to provide greater challenge in lessons for the most able students
- develop further students' understanding and appreciation of religious and cultural diversity in modern-day Britain.

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 day school for pupils with severe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties		
Date school opened	June 2003		
Age range of pupils	8–18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 9	Girls: 1	Total: 10
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 8	Girls: 1	Total: 9
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 3	Girls: 1	Total: 4
Annual fees (day pupils)	£31,917 - £36,552		
Address of school	Unit 11, Plaxton Park Cayton Low Road Eastfield Scarborough North Yorkshire YO11 3BQ		
Telephone number	01723 582073		
Email address	anne.wood@farrowhouse.co.uk		
Headteacher	Ms Anne Wood		
Proprietor	Continuum Group		

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.



15 March 2012

Dear students

Inspection of Continuum School Scarborough, North Yorkshire, YO11 1BQ

Thank you all for the welcome you gave to Mrs Farrow and me when we inspected your school recently. We found talking to you, looking at your work and observing you learning very helpful. We particularly enjoyed hearing you sing and having fun playing outside in the playground. We judged that your school is providing you with a good education. The main reasons for this are as follows.

- The good curriculum and good teaching, along with your good relationships with staff, help you to make good progress, particularly in English and mathematics.
- You get on well with all of the staff who work hard to make sure you are all safe.
- The clear rules and expectations along with regular reviews of your behaviour targets help all of you to improve your behaviour.

We have suggested a couple of things which your headteacher and staff can do to make things even better for you.

- To use what they know about each of you to add more challenge in lessons for the most able students.
- To help you understand and appreciate more about the diverse nature of religions and cultures in Great Britain today.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Amraz Ali
Her Majesty's Inspector