

# Wessex College

Independent school progress monitoring 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.<sup>1,2</sup>

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**

Wessex College is an independent special school for students who have a range of behavioural, emotional or social difficulties. It provides up to 39 weeks schooling for a maximum of 10 young people aged between 11 and 18 years. At the time of this inspection visit there were 10 students on roll, four of whom have statements of special educational needs and a further two are undergoing statutory assessment for a statement. All students have been placed by local authorities and live in children's homes run by the same company as the school. All students have a history of family crisis, fragmented lives, multiple placements, along with challenging and risk-taking behaviour. During the inspection, there was one attending in Key Stage 3, with the remainder in Key Stage 4.

The school opened in 2001. It was last inspected by Ofsted in November 2011 when the quality of education was judged to be inadequate. There have been significant staff changes during past 12 months, including restructuring the management and leadership. The present centre manager, who took over in February 2012, leads and manages the day-to-day running of the school. There is also an external consultant who is sharing some of the duties and responsibilities for school leadership and management.

The school's aims are to work holistically with young people by supporting them to learn about themselves, to assess their life experiences, examine their behaviour and to address their educational needs.

## **Context of the inspection**

Following the inspection in September 2011, the school drew up an action plan to address the regulations that were not met. This was evaluated and approved in February 2012. This monitoring visit was made to check the school's progress in implementing its action plan.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

## Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

The inspection in September 2011 found that while the curriculum was satisfactory in terms of planning and schemes of work, it was not implemented effectively to enable students to make the progress they should. In its action plan, the school proposed to provide a range of suitable strategies and activities to successfully implement the school's schemes of work and planning, including training for staff in providing challenging activities for individual students. The school also proposed to review the delivery of all courses to ensure that all students could learn and make progress, and to introduce end-of-term reports to show students' progress in each subject. This inspection visit found that staff training has been effective. Short-term plans build effectively on medium- and long-term planning and provide a cohesive and systematic development of the curriculum in each subject area. The planning sampled during this visit showed that a wide range of approaches and activities is deployed to interest and challenge students' learning. In the lessons observed during the visit, students made good progress towards their personal targets and most achieved the learning goals set for them at the start of the lesson. The external consultant and the centre manager are regularly monitoring the implementation of the curriculum and providing help and support for staff in planning lessons.

The inspection in September 2011 found that while teachers had adequate subject knowledge to teach the courses that the students were following, they were not sufficiently adept at making sure that the curriculum and the planned lesson activities were adapted to meet students' individual academic needs. The tasks set by teachers were not sufficiently challenging and this severely limited the progress that students could make. There was an over-reliance on textbook activities and the lack of practical activities relating to real-life situations caused students to disengage with their learning. Students were excessively reliant on adults to help them to learn and improve. The pace of the learning in the lessons was too slow and not much work was done. The school did not have a good enough appreciation of students' prior and developing academic attainment and capabilities. Academic learning targets were not used to help students know how well they were doing, what they needed to do next, and how to improve their work. Too often, more-able students were asked to complete work that they already understood and not enough students who were intellectually capable were entered for GCSE or equivalent examinations.

In its action plan, the school made a number of proposals to address these shortcomings, including revising planning methods, increasing teachers' insights into students' prior attainment and implementing a new progress assessment and recording system. Staff were to be trained to plan their lessons more effectively. In addition, the action plan outlined proposals for the school's leaders to monitor these developments by: checking lesson planning weekly and routinely observing lessons; identifying and sharing good practice; monitoring students' progress closely and identifying and tackling underachievement promptly.

This inspection visit found that the school has successfully implemented the proposals in its action plan. The external consultant has worked with staff on drawing up and implementing new planning formats that provide a high level of differentiation for each student. Staff training has focused on making accurate assessments of each individual's prior learning and capacity, and reflecting this in the plans made for their next steps in learning. As a result, lessons focus well on students' individual needs and this was evident in the planning seen and learning observed during the visit. The school has registered with an examination board and now offers a range of academic courses together with those linked to students' personal and social development.

In the lessons seen on this visit, the school's new progress tracking procedures were observed in action. Lesson plans include specific tasks for each student and their progress towards defined success criteria is noted by staff so that by the end of the series of lessons or unit there is secure evidence to support summative assessment and inform end-of-term reports. Staff now ensure that students have opportunities to reflect, apply their thinking skills and take the initiative in their thinking. Support for individual students during lessons actively encourages them to develop their skills and understanding.

Staff now have a secure understanding of students' prior attainment and use this to plan the next stage of their learning. Staff demonstrate an awareness of the barriers to students making better progress in subjects due to gaps in their literary, numeracy and information and communication technology skills. As a result, they have raised expectations of what students can achieve and are setting more challenging tasks in order that students may better realise their potential. Students' progress is being carefully and regularly monitored and observations by the centre manager and external consultant indicate that staff are satisfactorily recognising and addressing students' underachievement.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The school has made good progress and now meets all regulatory requirements.

## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Special school for students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties		
<b>Date school opened</b>	2001		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 3	Girls: 7	Total: 10
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 2	Girls: 2	Total: 4
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 3	Girls: 7	Total: 10
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£44,440 – £50,500		
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:Josams@wessexcollege.co.uk">Josams@wessexcollege.co.uk</a>		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nigel Troop (Centre manager)		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Jo Sams		