

Brantwood Specialist School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Honoree Gordon HMI
Social care inspector	Deborah Foster

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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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

Brantwood Specialist School was first registered in August 2011 for up to 15 students. There are currently six students on roll, aged from 13 to 16 years. The school has a small residential unit nearby with one student who attends a college run by the Ruskin Mill Trust.

The school is part of the Ruskin Mill Trust group, which has been established for 25 years as a provider of education for young adults. The school provides an alternative, practically-based education for school-age students who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, including disabilities on the autistic spectrum. All students have a statement of special educational needs and have previously had significant problems with attendance at other schools. The school seeks to re-engage students in learning and to help them build effective relationships with others. To this end the school follows an holistic approach to education, based on the Steiner Waldorf educational principles for education and development.

The school is located in a suburb of Sheffield and occupies premises that were formerly an independent school for girls. This is the school's first full inspection.

Evaluation of the school

The quality of education is good. The school meets its stated aims well. As a result of the vocationally-based curriculum and the school's intervention strategies, students' behaviour is good. The school's alternative approach to education has led to improved attendance, better behaviour and more positive attitudes to learning than in students' recent past. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and is a particular strength. The provision for students' health, safety and welfare is good. The school's arrangements for safeguarding are robust; all the requirements are met. As a result of good teaching, students make good progress.

The school meets all the regulations for independent schools.

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. The curriculum is based on the Steiner-Waldorf principles of education, linked to the National Curriculum, and closely tailored to the needs of individual students. The holistic curriculum, with its emphasis on learning through practical activities suits these students and their styles of learning well, leading to much better engagement in learning and noticeable improvements in students' behaviour. It is delivered in a cross-curricular way through main themes, forming the morning lesson; and through a vocational programme in the afternoon. The main themes add coherence and relevance. Recent themes have included diversity, and the world of work. The extensive activities programme includes sports, outdoor activities, music and frequent visits out of school to places of interest.

The curriculum comprises: nature studies; arts; language; mathematics; therapies; cultural studies; and physical education. It is suitably balanced, with an emphasis on practical learning and activities as a means of re-engaging students in learning. There is a significant element of learning out-of-doors, drawing on nature, which opens students' eyes to the world around them. Students' knowledge, skills and understanding are developed in real, relevant contexts. Students follow lessons in textiles, woodworking and undertake practical work experience in the school kitchen, garden or in local services. The science curriculum focuses on the natural world, enhanced by visits to the trust's outdoor centre in a village nearby. Here students recently had the opportunity to dissect a sheep. This outdoors venue is a significant addition to the school's good resources for learning. The curriculum is engaging and interesting. Students say that they enjoy school. The impact can be seen in students' much-improved attendance and their enthusiasm for learning.

Literacy and numeracy skills are developed satisfactorily through the main lesson and reinforced in activities, for example through measurement in woodworking and communication through following instructions. This approach promotes engagement. However, at times opportunities are missed to enhance the pace of learning in these core skills for individual students. ICT skills are taught when relevant, such as in preparing information leaflets, short animation films and the school newsletter. There are no discrete lessons in information and communication technology (ICT). Currently, the school's policy for use of ICT lacks clarity.

Professional staff provide complementary therapies through art, eurythmy (movement), occupational therapy, speech and language, and massage. At this stage in the school's development, these elements have not yet been collated to determine the best provision for each student overall.

Suitable accreditation is in place for students' learning and continues to develop. Much learning is accredited through the National Open College Network. Where appropriate, students follow GCSE courses in conjunction with a local school. A programme for life skills fosters independent living skills and links with the Ruskin Mill Trust offer progression routes for further study.

Overall, the quality of teaching and assessment is good. Teaching is good and engages students well. Relationships are excellent. Teachers have appropriate specialist skills and knowledge and good questioning skills. Staff respond flexibly to students' responses, securing their willingness to learn. Lessons are carefully planned with short, related tasks to hold attention.

The environment for learning is excellent. Lessons are calm. Classrooms are well organised and resourced to smooth the learning process. The use of colour, light and sensory experiences adds to this relaxed environment for learning. Real enjoyment in learning was evident in an outstanding textiles lesson, where students were making felt from wool, with a sense of awe and wonder at the process, singing as they worked their colours in.

Assessment is satisfactory. A suitable system of half-termly assessments tracks students' progress. The school's leaders recognise that the system is new, but have appropriate plans to use the data more fully to adjust the targets set for students. Each student has personal targets in four aspects, including communication and living skills. These feature in lesson plans and weekly discussions.

The school's records show that, in this first year of operation, students have made good progress in learning. Lessons observed during the inspection reflect this. However, at times the pace of learning slackens when levels of challenge fall and learning outcomes for students then become less evident.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There are some aspects of outstanding practice: the planning and monitoring of the programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE); the promotion of diversity; and the promotion of students' spirituality.

The school accords a high priority to developing students' social skills. Staff model well the behaviour and attitudes they seek to develop in students. The Friday afternoon activities' programme fosters the development of social skills. Students learn to compromise on choice of activity, and to relate in a positive way to their peers. Outdoor activities and visits out of school introduce students to new leisure activities, developing their self-confidence.

The school's philosophy of useful, practical work and a range of sensory experiences encourages positive attitudes. Behaviour in lessons and around school is good, allowing effective learning to take place. Attendance has improved significantly; most students' attendance is at least average. Occasionally students attend part-time to ease them back in to full-time education.

A well-organised PSHE and citizenship programme supports students effectively in reflecting on issues that concern them and on their values and attitudes. Reflecting the strong focus on personal development, PSHE permeates all lessons. Students

learn about concepts of democracy and responsibility, right and wrong. They take an active part in decisions that affect them in school and link up well with their local community, selling their produce at a local farmer's market, for example.

Practical activities greatly enhance students' enjoyment of learning. Students grow more aware of themselves and their place in the world. This fosters their ability to form healthy, positive relationships with others, helping them for the next stage in their lives. The curriculum successfully re-establishes self-esteem.

Spirituality is promoted exceptionally well through the opportunities to explore and experience nature and its processes first hand. This is further fostered through thematic lessons on diversity and other cultures. A weekly 'Celebrations' session extends learning in ways that promote students' understanding and tolerance.

The school's self-evaluation processes are thorough. The delivery of PSHE is monitored closely, checking the impact the provision has on students' knowledge, understanding and attitudes.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school's arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of students are good. All the required policies are in place to underpin this. Records, such as for the prevention of fire, are kept carefully. The school's procedures and practice for safeguarding are good. Training for staff in child protection and first aid is up to date. Every student has an individual health and education plan.

Students feel at ease in the school. They are appropriately supervised. Staff are sensitive to students' needs. Questionnaires received from students, parents and carers show that students feel safe and are happy in school.

Healthy living and eating are actively encouraged and there are good opportunities for regular exercise in the fresh air. Complementary therapies help to break down students' emotional barriers to learning. Additional support is provided when needed, for example, on gender identity or sexual health, drawing on advice from health professionals. The school works closely with other agencies and professionals to support students.

The school complies with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The planning and oversight of diversity is a strength of the school's practice. Good practice is shared among staff.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school checks that there is no reason why staff should not be employed to work with children. The school conducts all the checks currently required on its staff, and supply staff, including a check with the Criminal Records Bureau. Recruitment practices are robust.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The premises are good, spacious and highly suitable. They have been refurbished and extended significantly. They are arranged on three floors, with numerous specialist rooms, classrooms, a common/dining room with kitchen, administrative areas, a woodworking room and a gymnasium. There are several areas suitable for quiet time and for complementary therapies. Attractive large gardens provide generous space for relaxation and work outdoors. The premises benefit from lots of natural light and soft colours, making the school a conducive place for learning.

Additional, new facilities are almost ready for use. These include two new science laboratories, a print-making and bookbinding room and a fitness suite. There is a computer in each classroom for use by staff and students. An outdoor site based around a farm in a nearby village offers further opportunity for work in the natural environment.

Provision of information

The school provides clear, accurate up-to-date information for parents and prospective parents and carers, and for other interested parties. Most information is in a prospectus and a guide for parents and carers, with updates on the school's website. There is a series of child-friendly booklets for students. Regular school newsletters go home and information is shared with the local community who are encouraged to attend events in school. Parents and carers receive regular, informative reports on their child's progress.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's procedure for the handling of complaints meets requirements. Procedures are set out in a written policy.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets all 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.

- Clarify the school's policy and practice for the use of ICT to promote learning.

- Further develop the therapeutic provision to give a more complete picture of provision for each student and to ascertain the impact of what is provided.
- Refine assessment systems to show students' progress over time.

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 school – Emotional behaviour and learning difficulties		
Date school opened	September 2011		
Age range of pupils	7-19 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 2	Girls: 3	Total: 5
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 1	Girls:	Total: 1
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 3	Girls: 3	Total: 6
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,500/week		
Address of school	1 Kenwood Bank Sheffield S7 1 NU		
Telephone number	0114 2589062		
Email address	admin@brantwood.rmt.org		
Headteacher	Constantin Court		
Proprietor	Ruskin Mill Trust		

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.



22 June 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Brantwood Specialist School, Sheffield S7 1NU

I am writing to thank you for your help when I came to inspect your school recently and to share my findings with you.

The quality of education your school provides is good. The curriculum is good. It is clear to me that the range of subjects and activities that you do are making coming to school more interesting for you. I was very pleased to see how much your attendance had improved. You told me that you enjoy doing the many practical activities on offer.

Teaching and assessment are good overall, and you are making good progress in your learning. Your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Your behaviour is good and there is a very pleasant atmosphere for learning in school.

The school has in place all the policies, records and documents it has to have to help keep you safe. I think the school makes good arrangements for your welfare, health and safety.

The school meets all the regulations for independent schools. I have made one or two suggestions for the headteacher to consider as to how the school might improve further. For example, as well as all your practical activities, to consider information and communication technology (ICT) further, because of its importance to your future for employment. There are also some good resources that would be helpful in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Honoree Gordon
Her Majesty's Inspector