

Horizon School Whitefield

Independent school standard inspection report

DfE registration number	351/6015
Unique Reference Number (URN)	135753
Inspection number	397641
Inspection dates	2–3 October 2012
Reporting inspector	John Coleman HMI

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090070.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

No. 090070

© Crown copyright 2012



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

Horizon Whitefield is an independent special day school. The school is located in the centre of Whitefield in a two-storey Victorian terraced house in a residential area, adjacent to a main road and local shops. It is registered for eight places for students aged from 11 to 16 years. There are currently five students on roll aged from 14 to 16 years. Two students have a statement of special educational needs. All students are in the care of the local authority. Horizon Whitefield provides education for students with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties (BESD) and aims 'to facilitate personal educational achievement in an environment that is stimulating and inspires individual success'. Students often join the school after a history of exclusion and long-term absence from mainstream schools or other special school provision. The school is part of the wider Horizon group who operate a number of children's homes and two other schools across England. The school opened in November 2008. It changed ownership in August 2012 and has requested a material change from the Department for Education. The school experienced significant turbulence to staffing in the last 12 months, particularly to the post of lead teacher which is currently vacant. The school is led by a consultant headteacher who divides his time between the company's three schools. It was last inspected in October 2010.

Evaluation of the school

Horizon Whitefield School provides a satisfactory quality of education for its students. Due to a satisfactory curriculum and satisfactory teaching and assessment, students make good progress in their personal development and satisfactory progress in their academic learning. The school meets its aims well by ensuring students make significant improvement with regard to their social, emotional and behavioural needs. Students' behaviour and their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development are good. Leaders and staff provide well for students' welfare, health and safety and arrangements for safeguarding meet all the requirements. The school meets all but two of the independent school regulations. This represents good improvement since the last inspection when several regulations were unmet.

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

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

Quality of education

The curriculum and other activities are satisfactory in meeting the range of needs and interests of students. Students are admitted to the school at different points in the school year and at any age from 11 to 16 years. The curriculum is planned to provide flexibility to meet this wide variation in starting points. All students receive courses in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science together with opportunities to study physical education (PE), information and communication technology (ICT), art and personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE). Other options are provided according to individual student's needs. Currently, they include law, economics, history, food technology, media studies and music. School timetables are individually tailored and show that all students receive a suitable broad and balanced curriculum. The school is a registered examination centre for the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) and the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). Students benefit from opportunities to undertake a range of external qualifications. Policies and schemes of work are in place for each subject. Students with a statement of special educational needs are able to access a modified curriculum which takes full account of their specific requirements.

Provision for science is restricted by minimal resources. For example, there is no laboratory. Also, the staffing turbulence in recent months has resulted in a fragmented availability of teachers with suitable scientific subject expertise. Leaders in the school arranged for students to be taught in a local mainstream school for science but this was unsuccessful. Consequently, the school's curriculum provision for science although satisfactory needs improvement.

Educational visits make a good contribution to enriching and extending the curriculum. Effective use is made of local museums and places of educational interest. Also, students are able to experience a residential visit to Bala in Wales. Visitors to the school add interest and variety to learning. For example, the fire service and a local actor have contributed to students' experiences.

Students are suitably prepared for adult life through learning important language and communication skills and receiving career guidance through the Connexions service. Most previous students have successfully moved on to post-16 education and/or employment.

The effectiveness of teaching and assessment are satisfactory in meeting the full range of students' needs. The lack of a consistent lead teacher has reduced the overall quality of teaching during the last year. As one student told the inspector, 'I have had as many as three different history teachers in one week.' Nevertheless, leaders have remained determined to appoint only good quality teachers, and to this end, are currently implementing a selection process with the involvement of the students. The peripatetic staff, volunteers and supply teachers provide a sound range of teaching skills. Indeed, during the inspection the quality of teaching ranged

from outstanding to satisfactory and it was mainly judged as good. The teaching of mathematics is consistently good and sometimes outstanding.

Currently, teaching is characterised by mostly positive, friendly relationships between staff and students. Students' behaviour is very well managed and the impact of this is to minimise any interruptions to learning. Teachers prepare lessons carefully and have clear intentions for students' learning. Resources are well organised in advance so that lessons start on time and proceed smoothly. Teaching is often brisk and engages students' interest. However, some of the tasks and activities which students are set lack challenge and do not stretch students' understanding enough. All the students who spoke with the inspector thought that too much work was too easy. Tasks which give fun and enjoyment to students do not always facilitate new learning quickly enough.

The role of the many welfare assistants who work with the students is underdeveloped as regards supporting academic learning. In most lessons, the assistants are passive observers whose role is predominantly one of support and intervention if poor behaviour arises. This is a missed opportunity to maximise the skills of these staff for the benefit of students' educational progress.

Assessments are in place to determine students' attainment including the use of some standardised tests. Also, teachers use their professional judgement to assess the level of students' attainment. For example, in lessons, teachers regularly check on students' understanding and give support where needed. Upon admission to the school too long is taken before formal academic assessments take place. Unlike the assessments of students' BESD needs, which are immediate and rigorous, formal educational assessments take several weeks to be completed. The result of this is that students' learning slows in this period. Additionally, the results of assessments are not fully or sharply used to set targets for students' future learning and attainment. This reduces leaders' ability to check on students' academic progress.

Leaders conduct staff appraisal systematically, though the absence of a lead teacher is currently interrupting the regularity of this process. The headteacher has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school's provision. As a result of leaders' monitoring, a programme of staff development is provided through the company training systems. Much of this training is focused on improving staff skills regarding students' welfare and well-being. There is insufficient attention given to developing teaching skills.

Overall, students make satisfactory progress in their learning. In recent years students have gained notable external qualifications, some after a relatively short period in the school. School records show that, over time, all students attain some academic qualifications. Typically, students gain three or four GCSE's and additionally some basic skills awards and entry level science grades. The awards for science, which are consistently below those for English and mathematics, demonstrate the weaker progress which students make in this subject. Students with statements of special educational needs make similar progress to other students.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The quality of provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Staff are consistent in the implementation of the school's expectations for students' behaviour. As a result, students' behaviour shows good improvement and is good overall. Students are increasingly able to self-manage their own behaviour. This makes a positive impact on the progress students are able to make in learning. Not all students feel respected by all staff though in the main, relationships in the school are good. Consequently, students grow in self-esteem and confidence due to the praise and encouragement they receive. Students' attendance shows excellent improvement. Many students arrive with a history of sustained non-attendance at their previous schools. Although the average percentage of attendance, at 74%, is well below that seen nationally in all schools, it represents significant improvement. For most, absence is not a barrier to learning but, for a very small minority, it considerably hinders academic progress.

Opportunities to promote students' social development are an integral part of daily school life. Staff constantly encourage good manners and in return most students are polite and courteous towards each other and with staff. Social conversation is a feature of the start of the school day and at lunchtimes. Staff take a close interest in students' social activities in school and in their home life. The cultural development of students is a strong feature of the curriculum provision. Students learn about other cultures through educational visits such as to local restaurants serving an international cuisine and to places of worship such as the Sikh temple. The curriculum for PSHCE promotes students' empathy and tolerance of others views. Students learn about British institutions through the history curriculum, visits to museums and from visits from the emergency services.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of students is good. Case studies show very good systems which make effective use of external agencies including those for safeguarding students. Staff have appropriate up-to-date training for child protection and first aid. The school has a full range of the required policies to ensure the health and safety of students. The practice in school shows very effective implementation of these policies. For example, robust risk assessments are made for educational visits. Fire assessments and drills are carried out regularly and electrical tests check the safety of appliances. There is a no smoking policy which is stringently adhered to by all. Sports activities are organised which make good use of local and regional facilities such as the ice skating rink. Healthy eating is encouraged through lunch advice and through the curriculum in such subjects as food technology. Students are taught about internet safety and the dangers of drugs and alcohol misuse. Students say they feel safe. The school's attendance register has several entries made in pencil and this does not meet the government regulations.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

All the required safeguarding checks on staff are made, such as those by the Criminal Records Bureau, and are recorded appropriately in a single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

Overall, the premises make an effective contribution to the provision for students' learning. The school provides three good-sized, bright and airy classrooms, one of which contains a small computer suite. Additionally, there is a good-sized common room. Furnishings and fittings are of an appropriate standard. The standard of decoration is good. Outdoors there is a small hard-surfaced area with a picnic table which can be used for break times.

Provision of information

The school complies with all requests from Ofsted and the Department for Education for information about the school. Parents and carers are provided with a good range of information. The school has a website which includes helpful information. Reports provide suitable information about the attainment and progress of students. Generic company accounts are sent to local authorities but they do not detail individual income and expenditure for each pupil in each authority.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's complaints policy and procedures fully meet the requirements.

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.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

- ensure that attendance registers are always completed in ink (Paragraph 17).

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

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

- ensure that annual reports are sent out to each placing local authority detailing income and expenditure for each student (Paragraph 24 (1)(h)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- improve the science curriculum for all students and increase the rate of progress in this subject
- maximise the skills of welfare staff to better support the educational progress of students
- improve the rigour of initial assessments and use these to effectively target future learning.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
-------------	------	--------------	------------

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		✓		
--	--	---	--	--

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties		
Date school opened	September 2008		
Age range of pupils	11–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 5
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 2	Total: 2
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 5	Total: 5
Annual fees (day pupils)	£25,782		
Address of school	169 Bury New Road Whitefield Manchester Greater Manchester M45 6AB		
Telephone number	0161 766 4576		
Email address	horizon.whitefield@horizoncare.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Steve Ellis		
Proprietor	Horizon Care Limited		

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.



4 October 2012

Dear students

Inspection of Horizon Whitefield School, M45 6AB

Thank you for welcoming me into your school when I visited you recently. I thoroughly enjoyed my time with you and would like to share with you what I found out about your school. I judged that Horizon Whitefield School provides a satisfactory quality of education. These are the main reasons why I judged the school to be satisfactory.

- The quality of teaching and the curriculum is satisfactory so that you make satisfactory progress, learn new skills and gain some important qualifications.
- You do very well in improving your behaviour.
- You mostly enjoy school, feel safe and in particular you appreciate the efforts of the staff.
- You are improving your personal skills which will help you in the future.

All schools need to develop and improve and I have asked that the staff increase the progress that you make by improving the curriculum for science. Also, the school must make better use of the school's assessments about your learning. Additionally, I have asked that the school makes better use of the welfare assistants to help you in your education.

Thank you once again for all your help. I wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

John Coleman
Her Majesty's Inspector