

New Direction School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Peter McKenzie

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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

New Direction School is an independent special school which was opened in September 2004 and is located on the outskirts of Clowne, a small rural town in Derbyshire. The school provides for students aged from 11 to 16 years with severe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties who are at risk of exclusion from their previous schools, and all have a statement of special educational needs. It occupies premises within a complex that includes a farm and equestrian centre with provision for adults with learning difficulties, all under the same proprietor. There is some sharing of staff and facilities. There is currently only one student on roll. The school's aim is to reintegrate students to appropriate education or to other suitable provision through a programme of personalised learning and a therapeutic approach. Through its ethos of 'A positive present to ensure a positive future', the school encourages students to change their attitude to learning, to attend well and to develop skills that will support them in their adult lives, whether socially and personally or through work. The school was last inspected in July 2009.

Evaluation of the school

New Direction School provides its students with a satisfactory standard of education and is successful in meeting its stated aims. Students behave well and make satisfactory progress, often from a low starting point, because they regain a commitment to learning. Satisfactory teaching is based on an individual curriculum plan for each student. Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good. The school's safeguarding arrangements fully meet the regulations. The school meets all except two of the regulations.

Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory. Students follow a personal curriculum plan which provides experience in all the required areas of learning. There is a strong emphasis on basic skills and recent students have left the school with GCSE passes in English and mathematics. This represents broadly satisfactory achievement, and there are examples of good progress. Students follow a practical curriculum in subjects such as art and food technology and a wide-ranging physical education and outdoor activities

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

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

programme, which are particularly popular, and some good outcomes provide them with increased self-esteem. In these subjects and others such as history and geography, students join the school with prior attainment in line with that in their basic skills. However there is too little opportunity to acquire accreditation in this wider range of studies. When students do receive awards, it makes a difference. A parent said, 'He is really pleased with his badges and certificates from the Pony Club.' A programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) ensures that students develop skills for life in the community. These include careers and work experience, sex education, drugs awareness, citizenship and understanding of other cultures. However, it is in real life experiences that they gain the skills and knowledge that equips them for the next stage in their lives. The school's equine therapy is effective in developing relationships and instilling calm in boisterous characters. A student has already been inspired to seek a volunteer placement with the RSPCA. A recent student spent a period of work experience with the on-site adult provision for those with learning difficulties and earned praise from professionals for the quality of his work. A parent of one student said that, prior to arriving at New Direction, 'He didn't seem very engaged' but 'He wants to go to school now.'

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory. Teaching is in very small groups, often individual. Planning for individual students' activities and outcomes are recorded regularly in students' files. A parent spoke of a curriculum 'tailored to their needs'. Assessment procedures are thorough and students are assessed by subject to determine attainment on entry and tracked regularly thereafter. Learning styles are assessed, as are concentration and engagement. Termly reports of a high standard are sent to parents and/or carers. However, information gained by assessment does not consistently inform lesson planning and this can result in insufficient challenge in some of the teaching. Teachers are deeply committed to their students, care for them and want them to make progress. On occasions they do too much for them and do not give them enough opportunity to work independently.

Students make satisfactory progress. Most arrive at New Direction with an interrupted educational experience resulting in low prior attainment. All students make at least the expected levels of progress in English and mathematics. These outcomes have enabled recent students to progress to the next stages of learning. However, the lack of accreditation in a wider range of subjects may restrict some students' opportunities in the next stage of their education. Students usually arrive at the school with unresolved behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Most develop learning and social skills which enable them to take their place in the next stage of education, usually at a local college. The school improves behaviour, allowing students to focus more on learning and select activities they like, whereas attitudes may have previously been very negative.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is satisfactory. The PSHE curriculum equips students with skills for life, and being in a caring environment for animals, and adults with learning disabilities, teaches them to reflect

on their own values and behaviour. Open countryside and a calm environment have a significant impact on the behaviour of students who have previously experienced only the hustle and bustle of a busy school community. There is much trust in the school and clear understandings of right and wrong. Reward time provides a real incentive for responsible behaviour. School visits to a wide range of places, meeting with other students, visitors and other users of the site all broaden students' experiences and develop understanding of the natural world and social interaction. Despite the teaching of anti-racist behaviour in the PSHE curriculum, the school and local community offers very little interaction with members of other cultures and the practical aspect of this area of learning is underdeveloped. Behaviour is good. Students respond to the expectations of the school, the incentives and the calm environment. Despite occasional lapses in engagement in the classroom, students with a history of behavioural difficulties respect the challenges of a caring community. Students have all significantly improved their attendance since joining New Direction.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is good. The school has a comprehensive welfare, health and safety policy in place. There are good fire safety procedures: appliances are fully maintained; evacuations are regularly and thoroughly carried out. Fire risk assessment is very thorough, as required by the presence of animals and vulnerable adults on site. The school has in place all the required policies for child protection, and implements these policies well and reviews them regularly. Admission and attendance registers fully meet requirements. First aid provision is fully in place with trained first aiders clearly signposted. All testing of electrical and fire equipment is up-to-date. Health and safety on educational visits are supported by risk assessment and fully meet the recommended procedures. Supervision and entry and exit controls ensure that visitors to the site respect health and safety requirements. Students are aware of healthy lifestyles and practise the principles in food technology and physical education.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The single central register fully meets requirements. Comprehensive procedures are fully in place to verify the suitability of proprietors, staff and others to ensure their suitability to work with students.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school accommodation ensures the safety of students and enables them to learn effectively. Classrooms in a dedicated area of the complex provide a suitable, well-appointed learning environment. The extensive grounds and accommodation for animal husbandry are an excellent setting for outdoor pursuits and equestrian activities. Students also use a nearby swimming pool. There are other activities on site but these do not affect the school's work. Toilet, medical and kitchen provision are all suitable for purpose.

Provision of information

The school has a brochure and a website for providing information to parents, carers and others. Basic information about the school and its headteacher and proprietor is in place. Although the school has good policies in all required areas, there is insufficient detail about the scope and availability of this information. The safeguarding policy is not available to parents and carers through the website, as required by the regulations. The particulars of the school's curriculum provision appear in the school brochure and, in outline, on the website. The school produces high quality reports on students' academic and personal progress to parents three times a year.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The complaints procedure meets regulatory 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 the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- make available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils, and on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State, or an independent inspectorate:
 - particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs and for pupils for whom English is an additional language
 - particulars of the curriculum policy of the school
 - particulars of policies relating to bullying, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour, and sanctions adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving as required
 - particulars of the arrangements for tackling bullying, and for promoting pupils' health and safety on the school premises and on educational visits as required
 - particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations.
 - details of the complaints procedure adopted by the school, together with details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year

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

- the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 24(1)(b)).
- publish the safeguarding children policy on the school's website (paragraph 24(1)(c)).

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 greater use of assessment information to structure lessons and allow students more independence in their learning
- enable students to seek accreditation in a broader range of subjects.

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		
Date school opened	September 2004		
Age range of pupils	11-16		
Gender of pupils	Male		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37,733		
Address of school	Ringer Lane, Clowne, Chesterfield, S43 4BX		
Telephone number	01246 810456		
Email address	Yvonne@new-direction.org.uk		
Headteacher	Yvonne Evans		
Proprietor	Yvonne Evans		

21 September 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of New Direction School, Chesterfield, S43 4BX

Thank you for your help when I visited your school recently. I believe that New Direction is helping you to make progress in your work and in your personal lives. I know you appreciate what your teachers do to help you and I know that they are pleased with what you have achieved so far, and they hope to see you go on to more success. I was pleased to hear that you are attending school more regularly and making progress and hope that you may now want to go on to college at the end of your time in school.

New Direction is providing you with a satisfactory education. I know that you have improved your work since you joined the school. I believe that you can do even better, so I have asked your teachers to give you some work which will challenge you to achieve even more. I have also asked that you have the chance to get as many qualifications as possible.

I know that you have enjoyed working with the horses and I hope that you will continue to improve your riding skills.

You have been given a really good opportunity to go to school at New Direction. I hope you will continue to make the very best of this opportunity. I wish you every success both at New Direction and wherever you go in the next stage of your life.

Yours sincerely

Peter McKenzie
Lead Inspector