

The Lighthouse Group (TLG) Centre

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

The Lighthouse Group (TLG) Centre is an independent day school which provides education for students aged between 12 and 16 years who have been, or are at risk of being, excluded from other schools. The school has a Christian ethos and is in the ownership of Reading Community Church, a charitable trust. It works in partnership with The Lighthouse Group, a national Christian charity which provides a network of alternative education centres for young people. The school aims to 'educate young people and transform lives' by offering individual programmes which focus on students' personal development and on their acquisition of basic numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Students usually attend part time, for two days each week, while remaining on the roll of their referring school. A few students attend full time, usually due to the breakdown of their previous placements. Currently 10 students are on roll, five of whom have a statement of special educational needs for behaviour, emotional and social difficulties. Students are generally resident in the local authorities of Reading and West Berkshire and have their places funded by their referring schools. The school is based in leased church buildings located in a residential area on the outskirts of Reading. This is a new school undergoing its first inspection. It opened in February 2010 and was registered in March 2011.

Evaluation of the school

The Lighthouse Group (TLG) Centre provides a good quality of education and it is particularly successful in re-engaging students with learning and in raising their self-esteem. The excellent relationships between staff and students underpin students' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their good behaviour. Good teaching and a high standard of care ensure students make good progress in their learning. Arrangements for safeguarding and the provision for students' welfare, health and safety are good. In a relatively short period of time since it opened, the school has established a high reputation with referring schools and local authorities for its successful work with young people. The school meets almost all of the regulations, although it does not meet two key ones relating to the quality of the curriculum available for a small number of students who have full-time places.

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 satisfactory. The curriculum is supported by a clear policy which emphasises the development of students' personal skills, thereby enabling them to be more successful in social relationships and in managing potentially difficult situations on their return to mainstream school. A very relevant range of topics is provided which includes dealing with conflict, managing anger, understanding emotions and maintaining friendships. An individual programme is provided for each student to extend basic numeracy, literacy and ICT skills. Scientific and practical areas of learning are covered through projects, for example on the environment, growing vegetables and making bird boxes. Physical exercise is provided in the school hall and provision enables students to get a satisfactory amount of exercise and to keep fit. The majority of students attend for two days each week while continuing to attend their mainstream school for the rest of the week. The school seeks to return these students to their mainstream schools after a period of 12 weeks. For these students, the curriculum is planned effectively and it is very appropriate for their needs. Students benefit from very good support to promote their successful return to mainstream schools and they receive suitable advice about their future career options. However, for a few students who attend full time, curriculum plans and schemes of work are underdeveloped. Facilities are not available on the school site to teach the practical aspects of the scientific and technological areas of learning in sufficient depth. The school is exploring links with the wider community to provide vocational options. For these students, the amount of full-time supervised education falls short of the minimum required.

The school meets the needs of students as set out in their statements of special educational needs. A few students who have a full-time place at the school are being gradually reintroduced to education after a period of non-attendance, or following the breakdown of their previous school place. In the longer term, some of these students will require access to the full National Curriculum which the school is not able to offer currently.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Teachers form excellent relationships with students and demonstrate a close understanding of their individual needs. They manage the few behavioural incidents sensitively and calmly so that the flow of a lesson is not disrupted. Students appreciate the patient approach of staff and the individual help that they receive. In the words of one, 'I am so happy that I have people like this; the teachers really help me when I need help.' Teachers have a thorough knowledge of teaching the personal skills curriculum and of running discussion groups. The school is also able to draw on the expertise of volunteers to teach some practical subjects. Lessons contain a good range of activities, with students given an element of choice in how they complete work. ICT is used well to support learning, for example when students record their feelings and evaluate their learning each day on a 'My Day' programme. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to extend students' numeracy, literacy and ICT skills in the personal development sessions.

On entry, the school completes an assessment of each student's functional skills in numeracy, literacy and ICT and an assessment of their attitudes and personal feelings. Teachers use this information effectively to plan individual and group activities. School data show that students make good progress in relation to their starting points, particularly in managing their behaviour and in re-engaging with learning. Students leave with a recognised accreditation in personal and social development and GCSE Entry Levels in functional skills. Almost all those who left in the last academic year progressed to suitable destinations in education, training or employment.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school is extremely successful in raising students' self-esteem and in enabling them to participate in wider group activities. Students value the awards ceremony which takes place at the end of each 12 week programme. Parents, carers and representatives from the school's partners attend, and an outside speaker is invited to present certificates. 'Prime time' at the start of each day enables students to reflect and to share their thoughts with the group in a climate of trust. Students are made to feel welcome and almost all have improved their attendance since coming to the school.

Students' behaviour is good because the school has a clear approach to behaviour management which is understood by students and is consistently implemented by staff. When students join the school, they sign an 'agreement and conditions of acceptance' which set out rules on behaviour. In accordance with the school's philosophy of 'restorative justice', staff emphasise the need for students to 'put right' mistakes and to move forward in a positive way. Following an incident of inappropriate behaviour, a student might clean up a mess they have made or write a letter of apology to those who have been offended. In general, students have positive attitudes to learning and enjoy school life. Staff provide excellent role models, always treating students with respect, while at the same time expecting high standards of behaviour. They have all completed training in 'non-violent crisis intervention' and rarely need to resort to excluding students from school. Students like the reward system which recognises effort and achievement and enables them to earn trips out, for example, to the cinema or to an ice skating rink. Staff work very closely with students' families, keeping them informed of progress and engaging their cooperation.

Students take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour, setting targets for improvement and reviewing their progress regularly. They contribute very well to the school and wider community when, for example, they take part in recycling or help design posters and tickets for a local church social event. Students benefit from a very appropriate citizenship programme which stresses rights and responsibilities and provides a general knowledge of public institutions and services. The programme has included visits to the school from a local magistrate, the police and members of a local law practice. Very good support is given for students to develop an

understanding of different religious and cultural traditions in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony. Topics on cultural diversity and on the different issues facing groups around the world are supported by visiting speakers, often arranged through connections with the local churches.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The quality of welfare, health and safety is good. The school provides a safe and caring environment for students. Staff treat students with respect and show a very good understanding of their individual needs. In the words of one student, 'Staff really care about us. They treat you like an adult here.' As a result of the trusting relationships that exist between students and staff, students show a willingness to discuss difficulties in a frank and mature manner. While recognising inappropriate behaviour does occur, students report that they feel safe in school and that any incidents of misbehaviour are managed effectively by staff.

Detailed health and safety policies and procedures cover all aspects of the school's work. Fire drills are held regularly and fire-fighting equipment is checked effectively by a specialist company. There is a suitable policy for the administration of first aid and any accidents are recorded appropriately. Robust arrangements are in place to safeguard students and all staff have received recent training, at the appropriate level, in child protection. Good levels of staffing, often supplemented by volunteers from the church community, ensure students' safety. The personal, social and health education and citizenship curriculum has a strong focus on leading a healthy lifestyle and forming safe and positive relationships. The school works closely with community organisations experienced in delivering programmes on the topics of, for example, alcohol and drug awareness and sex and relationships education. The school keeps a daily attendance register and holds useful information electronically in individual students' files. However, this information is not kept in a single admissions register as required. The school has produced a suitable plan to increase accessibility in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school has thorough procedures for the safe recruitment of staff. All the required checks on the suitability of the proprietor and of staff have been completed effectively. All checks are suitably recorded in a single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The accommodation is maintained to a satisfactory standard. A large open-plan room serves as the main classroom. It is of a suitable size for the number of students using it and contains attractive displays of students' work. Computers and work tables are arranged at one end of the room with a recreational area at the other. An adjacent hall provides space for indoor games and physical education, and a small vegetable plot enables students to grow plants. However, the lack of specialist rooms for teaching science, design and technology and art limits the range of topics that

can be taught in these subjects. A small grassed area with a picnic table provides suitable space for outside recreation.

Provision of information

All of the required information is provided, or made available, to parents, carers and others. The prospectus sets out the school's ethos, aims and organisation. Parents and carers receive six-weekly and end of term reports on the progress and attainment of those students who attend for 12 weeks. The school maintains regular contact with parents and carers through email, text and telephone conversations. A detailed report is provided annually for students who attend full time. The school works closely with local authorities to ensure that they receive suitable information on the progress of students who have a statement of special educational needs.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The complaints policy 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 quality of education provided (standards in part 1) and must:

- support the curriculum with appropriate plans and schemes of work for students who are referred for full-time education (paragraph 2(1))
- provide full-time supervised education for students of compulsory school age (paragraph 2(2)(a)).

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

- maintain an admissions register in accordance with the Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 17).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following point for development.

- Develop a long-term plan to meet the needs of students who are referred to the school for full-time education.

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

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	Secondary		
Date school opened	February 2010		
Age range of pupils	12–16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 1	Girls: 2	Total: 3
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 4	Girls: 3	Total: 7
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 3	Girls: 2	Total: 5
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£10,548 – £14,064		
Address of school	St Birinus Centre Empress Way Calcot Reading RG31 4XR		
Telephone number	0118 321 4506		
Email address	Quentin.gunderson@tlg.org.uk		
Headteacher	Quentin Gunderson		
Proprietor	Reading Community Church		

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.

2 February 2012

Dear Students



Inspection of The Lighthouse Group (TLG) Centre, Reading RG31 4XR

As you know, recently I visited your school to check how well it is doing. I enjoyed my visit very much and appreciated the welcome I received. Thanks to those of you who took time to talk to me about your work and life at school. I thought you were very sensible and mature. I also talked to staff and to some other adults connected with the school, visited lessons and looked at your work.

Here are the main points.

- Your school gives you a good education.
- You enjoy coming to school, behave well and make good progress.
- The school is particularly good at helping you to gain skills which help you to perform better in mainstream school.
- Provision for your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- The school cares for you well and you appreciate the understanding approach shown by staff, which helps you to feel valued.
- The school helps you to feel good about yourself and you really like the rewards ceremony when you get recognition for your achievements.

I have asked the school to improve the following things.

- Consider providing a wider range of activities for those of you who have a full-time place at the school.
- Ensure that there are suitable plans and schemes of work for all subjects and that the admissions register contains all of the required information.

You can help by always trying your best and suggesting to adults activities that might interest you. Thank you once again for your help with the inspection.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Redpath
Her Majesty's Inspector