

School URN 135425

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Michael Glickman

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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

This small school is an independent special school owned by Advanced Childcare which provides education for students from residential facilities within the company. It opened in October 2007 and is registered for students between the ages of 10 and 18 years who are unable to attend mainstream schools because of severe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. All students have a statement of special educational needs and are looked after by a local authority. The school aims to promote 'excellence, equality and high achievement for all, by unconditional positive regard for everyone' and 'to raise the attainment level and academic achievement of all pupils regardless of past experiences.' The school was last inspected in May 2009, at which time it was judged to be satisfactory overall although one regulation was not met.

Evaluation of the school

This school provides a good standard of education and meets its aims. Teaching and learning are good and students make good progress. The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good and their behaviour is satisfactory. The provision for the welfare, health and safety of students is good. Safeguarding requirements are met in full. The school has improved since its last inspection and now meets all the regulations.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. The school carries out detailed assessments of students on arrival and uses the results to provide a curriculum appropriate to their needs and which also meets the requirements of their statements of special educational needs. Although most students only attend the school for a short period, a number have achieved recognised academic and vocational qualifications and some have continued to further education. The school follows the National Curriculum and offers all students the opportunity to achieve GCSE certificates. Basic Skills Awards, Unit Awards and vocational qualifications are offered where appropriate.

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

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

Work placements are arranged for older students and full work-based programmes are available for students above statutory school age. Students are offered appropriate careers advice and can be directed to local businesses and further education establishments with which the school has developed good links.

There are curriculum policies and schemes of work in place for all subjects and teachers have detailed lesson plans. In some cases, they prepare alternative plans in case students fail to engage with the planned lesson. The teaching staff work at different Advanced Childcare schools in the area and, as a result, have developed portable resources which are easily transported.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. The school often has little information about students on their arrival and is aware that their stay is likely to be of limited duration. Therefore, it rapidly assesses their knowledge and ability using a series of tests which enable staff to identify the appropriate level for each student. These tests are repeated every six months so that students' progress can be tracked.

Because of the small size of the school and the nature of the student body, relationships are informal and teachers clearly enjoy a good relationship with students. Teachers are strongly committed to helping students succeed. They are flexible in their approach and attempt to tailor their teaching to the interests of the students, for example, by using a card game to teach mathematical concepts to students with an interest in card tricks. Teachers exhibit remarkable patience and persistence when dealing with reluctant students and will try a range of approaches until the students engage with the lesson. When students completely refuse to participate in lessons, staff identify the cause of their refusal and modify their approach effectively.

Because some students have very short attention spans, staff are prepared to change topics or even subjects at short notice, before returning later to the original lesson. They use learning resources, games, crafts and technology well to vary the approaches used in their lessons. In the best lessons, teachers allow students to develop their own ideas and opinions through good questioning and encouragement. Other lessons, however, are more teacher-led and students have less opportunity to participate actively or work independently.

The school takes every opportunity to broaden students' experiences and to develop their self-confidence through a varied programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) and by appropriate trips and visits. Students are regularly taken to the theatre and to museums and exhibitions to supplement classroom learning and have access to a range of local sports and fitness facilities as well as to the countryside. They meet with students from other schools run by Advanced Childcare for joint activities and are encouraged to pursue their own interests and hobbies.

Staff maintain comprehensive records of lessons taught and student participation and progress. This enables the tracking of students' progress in both the short and the long term and identifies where further development is needed. It also assists

consistency between peripatetic teaching staff who may only see particular students occasionally.

Although the rapid turnover of the student population makes it difficult to maintain continuity of education, students make good progress in their learning during their time at the school, as evidenced by both the school's own tracking information, by external assessments undertaken and qualifications gained.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. Because students have emotional and behavioural difficulties, the school promotes a positive attitude towards life through inspirational posters and videos. Although progress is sometimes slow, a number of students do develop a much more positive self-image and begin to understand how to manage their responses. The staff of the school reflect the multicultural nature of society and students learn to respect other cultures through meeting a range of different visitors and through visits to places of worship and other community buildings. The school celebrates the European Day of Languages with special events and has an annual week of off-timetable activities linked to the PSHE curriculum, including visits to local institutions, preparing food from other cultures and guest speakers. Students recently came together with other Advanced Childcare schools to participate in fund-raising for Children in Need Day, while students unable to work in larger groups carried out similar activities within the school. The good opportunities provided by the school result in strong social development for students.

Students learn about public and local institutions through citizenship lessons and through visits, for example to the local police and fire station, and the Police Community Support Officer visits the school regularly. Moral development is good. For example, students have recently studied human rights and have produced wall displays on the rights of the child.

Behaviour is satisfactory. Students can demonstrate extremely challenging behaviour, but staff provide positive role models by treating students with dignity and respect despite provocation and by making clear what kind of behaviour is expected. Students agree behaviour targets with staff and work to complete reward cards and gain vouchers by meeting these targets. Trips and outings are also used as incentives for positive behaviour. Staff monitor and record student participation in lessons and identify any negative patterns so that appropriate solutions can be put in place. The external awards achieved by a number of students demonstrate clear improvements in self-esteem and the ability to persevere.

Care staff from the residential units work well with the teaching staff to support students' learning both within and outside the classroom. However, they do not always appreciate that the teaching staff are responsible for classroom management during lesson time, which can sometimes lead to students being allowed to leave the room inappropriately or be otherwise distracted.

Although the school timetable provides a one-hour lunch break, there are no activities for the students during this period and the length of the break disrupts their concentration. Occasionally, this leads to a deterioration in behaviour and makes it difficult to involve them in lessons in the afternoon.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of students is good. The school has a comprehensive child protection policy and staff are confident in its use. The designated officer for child protection and all staff are trained to the required standard. They receive refresher training at appropriate intervals. The school maintains admission and attendance registers which comply with regulations. All other policies, including behaviour and anti-bullying policies are in place and are fully implemented.

All staff have received first aid training and detailed risk assessments have been carried out for all activities. There are appropriate health and safety policies and regular fire drills are carried out. The nature of the student body means that staff are required to be vigilant to ensure student safety. All teaching staff take their responsibilities in this respect seriously and supervise students well in school. Care staff from the residential units share relevant information with teachers to enable them to respond appropriately to safety issues which may arise in lessons. Classroom activities and resources are designed to ensure that students cannot endanger themselves or others.

Students are served freshly cooked healthy meals and learn to prepare them in food technology lessons, where they also learn about healthy eating, for example, by making an 'Eat Well' plate. They have recently learned about 'being healthy' and have produced wall displays about healthy and unhealthy lifestyles. Teaching and care staff work together effectively to promote a healthy lifestyle for students by encouraging them to participate in exercise and sports.

Students learn to keep themselves safe online and their internet use is closely monitored. They learn well about safe relationships and are encouraged to discuss any problems with the appropriate members of staff.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school has carried out the required checks on staff and proprietors and maintains a single central register which complies with regulations. A suitable safer recruitment policy is in place and implemented. The school does not use supply staff.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school occupies a detached house in a residential area. The premises comply with regulations and the single classroom is suitable for promoting safe and effective

teaching and learning. The premises are bright and recently decorated and the classroom has displays of students' work as well as motivational posters. Although there are no dedicated science or design and technology facilities, staff make good use of portable equipment to support their lessons and students have access to computers with controlled internet access. There is a well-equipped kitchen which is used for food technology and a comfortable lounge area. The rear garden provides a safe area for students to play but there are no facilities on the premises for sports. Instead, students use the nearby leisure centre or local park.

Provision of information

The school provides parents and carers with all the required information through its prospectus and its website. Parents, carers and local authorities who place students in the school receive written reports on students' progress.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a complaints policy which complies with regulations.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').³

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Ensure that all teaching gives students regular opportunities to actively participate in lessons and to develop their own ideas.
- Investigate ways of reducing the length of the lunch break or providing students with worthwhile activities during the break.
- Ensure that residential care staff have a clear understanding of their role in supporting teaching and learning during lesson time.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/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	Special – for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties		
Date school opened	October 2007		
Age range of pupils	10–18 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
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: 1	Total: 1
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Annual fees	£33,676		
Headteacher	Olufemi Onasanya		
Proprietor	Advanced Childcare		

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.



30 November 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of School URN 135425

Thank you for allowing me to observe your lessons when I visited your school this week.

Your school is a good school and it provides you with a good standard of education. I was impressed by how the staff try to find out what you like and what you are good at and then plan lessons to interest you. I saw how patient they are and how they really want you to succeed. That is why they keep trying to teach you even when you do not want to learn. Some teachers work hard to encourage you to join in lessons by asking you questions and listening to your ideas. I have suggested that all teachers should do this.

The school has a good system for encouraging you to take responsibility for your own behaviour by completing rewards cards to win vouchers. I noticed, however, that you get bored during the lunch break and find it harder to behave well and work in the afternoon, so I have suggested to the school that they either shorten the break or organise activities for you. The care staff and the teaching staff work well together to help you learn, but I have asked the school to remind the care staff that the teacher is in charge in the classroom.

Everyone in the school is doing their best to help you. They want you to stay safe and be healthy and they try to show you how to look after yourself. If you join in with lessons, you will have a good chance of success.

Thanks again for your cooperation during the inspection. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Glickman
Lead Inspector