

Walnut Tree Lodge School

Independent school progress monitoring 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.^{1,2,3}

The inspection was conducted at the request of the Registration Authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan following the previous inspection.

Information about the school

Walnut Tree Lodge School is a day special school for up to 15 students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, aged 11 to 18 years. At present, there are five full-time students on the school roll. The school is located in a rural setting near Bedford. Students are currently placed at the school by Bedford, Luton, Northamptonshire, Peterborough and Milton Keynes local authorities. All have statements of special educational needs.

The school is now owned by Advanced Childcare Ltd. Over the past 18 months there have been several changes of school staff, including a temporary headteacher appointed in September 2011 and a substantive headteacher appointed in January 2012.

The school had its first inspection in May 2010 when the quality of education and students' welfare, health and safety were judged to be good.

Context of the inspection

An unannounced emergency inspection was conducted in June 2012 as a result of a complaint to Ofsted about the school, raising concerns about the safeguarding of students' welfare, health and safety. The emergency inspection identified a number of unmet regulations. The school submitted an action plan to the Department for Education (DfE) stating how it would rectify the regulatory failures. The action plan was approved by the DfE, with modifications, on 9 December 2012. This progress monitoring inspection was requested by the DfE to check the extent of the school's progress in implementing its action plan.

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

Since the time of the last inspection in June 2012, the school's parent company has revised the management and staffing arrangements at the school. In particular, the

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

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

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/14/contents.

company's regional headteacher is now deployed at the school site on a part-time basis each week to support the school's headteacher in leading a programme of development and improvement.

At the time of the inspection in June 2012 the school did not teach all the subjects of the National Curriculum as required by a number of students' statements of special educational needs. Schemes of work did not exist for some subjects. In particular, there were no schemes of work for personal, social and health education (PSHE) or citizenship. Students' personal timetables did not always include all the subjects required in their statements of special educational needs. There was no systematic planning for careers education. As a result of the lack of planning for PSHE and citizenship, students did not have adequate opportunities to develop their understanding of public institutions and services or to acquire a respect for other faiths and cultures in a way that promoted tolerance and harmony.

The school in its action plan stated that it would ensure that schemes of work were in place for all National Curriculum subjects and PSHE in order to provide the breadth of study required by students' statements of special educational needs. The PSHE programme was to be extended to ensure that students gained insights into public institutions and services. The religious education programme was to provide insights into cultures other than students' own. The action plan also stated that liaison would be established with the local Connexions careers service as the basis for the provision of careers education.

The curriculum policy has been re-written and now plans for a broad and balanced curriculum. Suitable subject policies, schemes of work and medium-term plans have been produced for almost all the subjects taught, including vocational education. However, the planning for design and technology does not provide an overview of the planned content and structure of the proposed courses in this subject. Lesson plans provide a secure structure for teaching and learning. These were seen in effective use in lessons observed during this inspection. Recent changes to the implementation of students' statements of special educational needs have improved the effectiveness of the school's response to their requirements. The school has introduced a useful vocational dimension to individual timetables, through the improved use of the farm which is part of the school. It has established a relationship with the local careers service. Suitable careers education software is in use and work experience can be accessed through the careers service. The company's regional headteacher is developing links with the wider range of services available to support students with special educational needs. The themes included in the PSHE/citizenship curriculum plan are derived from the national schemes of work. These provide a suitable insight into English institutions and public services. The religious education programme now has a multi-faith dimension, but the planning to date does not indicate clearly how different beliefs, cultures and lifestyles will be studied in a way which enables students to develop empathy and tolerance.

At the time of the inspection in June 2012 a number of students did not attend school on a full-time basis and were not provided with full-time education. The

school in its action plan stated that the school would work with the referring local authority to ensure that there was a package of full time education in place for each student. The number of students in receipt of education away from the school site has been reduced considerably. Any such student receives individual tuition on an outreach basis for four mornings a week in addition to work at home under the supervision of parents. One day a week is typically spent on a full-day placement at a local further education college. The school's arrangements now meet the regulatory requirement to provide full-time education.

At the time of the inspection in June 2012 school records showed that there had been a number of occasions where students' behaviour had been out of control. The school's procedures for reporting and recording sanctions were not sufficiently detailed or robust. The school in its action plan stated that an improved reward and incentive scheme would be introduced alongside a new focus on restorative justice, and that logs for the effective recording of incidents would be introduced.

A new behaviour management policy has been drawn up and implemented in recent weeks. Training has been provided for the staff by the regional headteacher on behaviour management and restraint. This process has also been used to achieve a change in culture. The new approach is based on positive reinforcement which enables students to achieve rewards at an achievable level. A sanctions log book is maintained with an appropriate level of detail about the sanctions applied. These are proportionate. Incident and sanctions records show a significant reduction in incidents in recent weeks. The new management arrangements are having a positive impact on behaviour and staff responses to misbehaviour. Regulatory requirements are now met.

At the time of the inspection in June 2012 some of the actions and behaviour displayed by students affected the health and safety of others, particularly bullying, smoking and spitting. The school planned to revise the policies for the management of behaviour and the prevention of bullying and to record and track incidents. The action plan has been implemented and policies revised. There are now modules on staying safe and on healthy lifestyles within the PSHE programme. A smoking cessation programme is available for any student who requires it. Smoking on site is not permitted and staff are vigilant with the implementation of the points system and behaviour targets. Staff are now proactive in addressing spitting and its control and cessation have been prioritised.

At the time of the inspection in June 2012 the headteacher, as the designated person for child protection, had not yet undertaken the required higher level training in child protection. The headteacher completed training to the required level in July 2012. He has also completed an additional three-day course on the manager's responsibilities for safeguarding. Training for all staff was updated in October 2012.

At the time of the inspection in June 2012 the school's fire risk assessment was not fully compliant and some required routine checks on fire fighting equipment were not regularly carried out and recorded. The door locking mechanism at the front door to

the school was damaged and did not ensure secure, controlled access to the premises. A classroom carpet had been damaged by fire and presented a health and safety risk. The headteacher and an additional member of staff attended fire marshal training in June 2012. The policy and procedures for fire safety checking have been reviewed. A suitable fire log is now maintained with details of regular checks at required intervals on all aspects of fire safety and fire fighting equipment. The fire risk assessment has been revised. Fire drills are now carried out. Fire extinguishers, fire alarms and emergency lighting are all subject to an annual maintenance contract with an external contractor. The organisation of documentation has been improved and it is now comprehensive and systematic. A new entrance door with an effective locking mechanism has been fitted. The damaged flooring in the affected room has been replaced with a laminate covering to a good standard.

At the time of the inspection in June 2012 the school did not include all the names of the students' last schools attended in the admission register. The admission register now includes all required details. The school's complaints procedure did not fully meet statutory requirements. There have been no complaints since the time of the previous inspection. However, the policy and procedures have been reviewed and there is now a requirement for all complaints to be signed off and outcomes recorded. The policy and procedures now comply fully with statutory requirements.

The school has made satisfactory progress in implementing its action plan. It now meets or is on course to meet all the regulations with the exception of those listed below.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

As a result of this inspection, the school must take action to meet The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010⁴ ('the Regulations'), as follows:

- the planning for design and technology must provide an overview of the planned content and structure of the proposed courses in this subject (paragraph 2(1))
- the planning for the contribution of religious education to the PSHE programme must indicate clearly how different beliefs, cultures and lifestyles will be studied in a way which enables students to develop respect and tolerance for cultures other than their own (paragraph 5(e)).

⁴ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made.

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties		
Date school opened	September 2009		
Age range of pupils	11 to 18 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 5	Girls: 0	Total: 5
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 5	Girls: 0	Total: 5
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£32,000		
Address of school	Renhold Road Wilden Bedford MK44 2PY		
Telephone number	01234 772081		
Email address	john.boslem@advancededucation.co.uk		
Headteacher	John Boslem		
Proprietor	Advanced Education Ltd.		