

Advanced Education – Gloucester

C/O Advanced Education, Warrington School, Unit 2 Forrest Way, Gatewarth Industrial Estate, Warrington, WA5 1DF

Inspection dates

5–6 June 2013

Overall effectiveness

Good

2

Pupils' achievement

Good

2

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

2

Quality of teaching

Good

2

Quality of curriculum

Good

2

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Good

2

Leadership and management

Good

2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- Students' achievement is good. They make good progress in English and mathematics from generally very low starting points.
- Through effective support from all adults, students' personal development improves; they begin to make up lost ground in learning. Consequently, a number of students are able to move back to local authority education.
- School records indicate that students do well because teachers plan interesting lessons. Teachers keep careful records to show exactly how students learn and make progress.
- The good teaching and learning is supported by a good curriculum. Students have access to a very wide range of learning opportunities including learning away from the school site. The school benefits from opportunities provided for students in the residential setting.
- Leadership and management are good and improving rapidly, leaders have shown they are capable of continuing to make improvements and are determined that students will receive a high quality service from the adults.

It is not yet outstanding because

- The systems for checking how well students learn are effective; however, records for previous students show that learning tasks are not matched sufficiently closely to students' abilities, to help them make even better progress, because teachers do not have easy access to this information.
- Leaders check how well the school is doing but the information is not always analysed well enough so that they have a better understanding of what can be improved.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection took place with one day's notice. The inspector met with the regional headteacher, the local headteacher and the on-site senior tutor.
- The inspector spoke with students who attended the school in the past. Although teaching was not observed, the inspector thoroughly scrutinised the work done by students together with associated records of their achievements kept by their teachers.
- Staff views were gained through discussions. There were insufficient responses to the Ofsted on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to make an evaluation.
- The inspector studied important documents, policies and records about the running of the school and its management.
- This inspection was carried out at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) even though there were no students on the school's roll at the time.

Inspection team

Terry McKenzie, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This very small day school caters primarily for students in residence with the company that owns it. Set up some years ago it was acquired by a new proprietorial body in 2012 with the registration completed in May 2013. Consequently, this is the first inspection since the change of ownership. The last inspection took place here in February 2010.
- The school serves boys and girls aged 11 to 18 years. It is registered to take up to two students. Almost all who attended the school in the past had a statement of special educational needs in respect of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). Most enter the school having experienced great disruption in their lives resulting in significant periods of missed schooling.
- The school sets out to enable students to become confident, resourceful, enquiring and independent learners. Through fostering their self-esteem and self-respect it aims to help them build positive relationships with others and respect the ideas, attitudes, values and feelings of others.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers can easily access the most up to date information about what students have learnt, so that they can match work more closely to students' interests and abilities, and help them make even better progress.
- Further strengthen the systems to check how well the school is doing by more robustly evaluating its strengths and weaknesses, so that leaders at all levels have a better understanding of what can be improved.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Students' achievement is good. They enter the school having experienced severe disruption in their lives and have not been attending school regularly. Typically, their standards on entry are very low compared with those of their peers in mainstream schools. Nevertheless, through good teaching and the effective work of all staff, students successfully take part in school activities. The evidence indicates that students attend lessons regularly. Their self-confidence and self-esteem are enhanced through gaining accreditations and national qualifications such as GCSE, Entry Level Certificates and BTEC. The qualifications gained are at a lower level than is expected nationally but nevertheless this demonstrates good progress from students' very low starting points. Previous students confirmed that the curriculum enabled them to enjoy their learning and achieve well. Recently, as a result of the good progress made in learning, two students successfully met their target of returning to local authority education.

There is a good emphasis on developing students' basic skills. Work from previous students provides clear evidence of their good progress. It also indicates that they develop and maintain important literacy and numeracy skills. For example, their writing, spelling and presentation improve over time, as does their ability to deal with numbers in everyday situations such as shopping. In all subjects, teachers have used marking to remind students of the importance of full stops and capital letters. Discussion with previous students confirms this. Students' work seen indicates that they take pride in their efforts.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Students' behaviour and personal development are good. Throughout their time at the school attitudes towards learning become good and students gain sufficient self-confidence and self-esteem to return to education operated by the local authority. The school code of conduct helps students to successfully overcome many of their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and to fully take part in school life. Records indicate that when students are on roll their attendance is good. Staff say that students are proud to wear school uniform. The trusting relationships built with staff support students well so that they make good academic gains and begin to catch up with others in mainstream schools.

School records show there have been few major behavioural concerns since the last inspection and few serious incidents. Teachers' records include a reference to behaviour in every lesson, showing that behaviour is good and that it improves over time. When questioned by the inspector, former students were keen to talk about the school. One said, 'It is great! The staff have helped me to turn things around!' These students indicate that relationships between school staff and themselves were very positive and were instrumental in helping them return to full-time productive education. They commented that bullying was almost unknown and that they felt very safe.

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The curriculum provides opportunities for students to meet with others outside school and find out how others live and work. Residential staff are instrumental in helping students gain an understanding of others who are different from themselves. For example, trips and visits are arranged to cultural centres and places of worship. Managers are proud of the multicultural workforce, encouraging all to share aspects of their different cultural and religious experiences with the students. School policies make it clear that any form of extremism is not tolerated either by students or by staff. The citizenship curriculum helps students know about public institutions and services in England and learn about different forms of bullying and how to avoid harassment. The personal, social and health education courses ensured that previous students were taught about how to keep themselves safe effectively in the wider world.

Quality of teaching**Good**

Teaching over time is good because it is effective in helping students to learn and make good progress. All of the evidence indicates this including discussion with senior managers, teaching staff, former students, together with a full scrutiny of school records. Owing to the fact that no students were on roll at the time of this inspection, lessons could not be seen. School records and documentation provide clear evidence that leaders have maintained previous good practice and also successfully introduced better ways of working where appropriate, for example, supporting teachers in maintaining the school code of conduct for students. This ensures that behaviour is good in school. Teachers plan very thoroughly indicating that teachers have a clear understanding of how to develop students' knowledge, skills and understanding in lessons. Discussions with staff and previous students indicate that time is used wisely during lessons and students undertake classwork that is both supported and independent. Occasionally, opportunities arise for them to study in small groups and gain experience of working with others outside of school. There is no shortage of apparatus and materials for practical work. For example, students undertake work in science about electrical circuits and use an extensive range of materials and equipment in practical lessons.

Records show that teachers assess students' work regularly and accurately. However, occasionally, the records indicate a time lag between the teachers recording of what students have learnt and the use of this information when planning the next round of work. There are plans in place for teachers to have better access to the very latest up-to-date information about students' previous learning and progress. Students state that when they were in school teachers provided them with interesting lessons that they enjoyed. Consequently, students were successful and they regained their confidence to learn. Written work is carefully stored by teachers and treated with respect.

Quality of curriculum**Good**

The good curriculum provides opportunities for all students to learn and make good progress. Courses are based on the National Curriculum or derived from externally accredited courses such as GCSE. For all age groups, the curriculum meets the requirements for an independent school. The school successfully focuses on helping all students gain the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, filling in gaps in their learning and returning to local authority education. Records show that when students are in school teachers carefully ensure that lessons are suitable for each individual. Consequently, the curriculum can be partly personalised to meet individual requirements. Any weaknesses are addressed such as in reading or aspects of number work, ensuring that all students achieve well.

Older students are encouraged to gain qualifications. Different routes through courses are planned according to students' interests and levels of ability. Consequently, some study Entry Level Certificate courses at an appropriate standard. Others follow GCSE courses. BTEC qualifications are available such as in catering. Students of all ages are encouraged to meet the requirements for AQA units in the Unit Award Scheme. Records show that this approach is instrumental in helping students regain confidence in learning because successes are rapidly acknowledged and rewarded.

Whenever there are students on roll and it is appropriate to do so, learning takes place away from the school site. For example, students undertake physical education at a local sports centre. Residential staff organise visits to museums and other places of interest to help students enjoy learning and experience aspects of it in a direct way. For any students above the statutory school age, individual arrangements for education are made following a full assessment of their needs.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety**Good**

The arrangements for students' welfare, health and safety are good, including for any education that takes place off-site. Leaders regularly review and maintain the school's systems regardless of whether there are students on roll or not. The school meets all of the relevant standards for independent schools. All required checks are made on the suitability of all staff and an appropriate central record of checks is maintained. Agency staff are not employed. The proprietor is diligent about safeguarding with staff correctly trained, some at a level higher than that required, and aspects of training are revisited regularly. Staff and former students confirm that they know who to report concerns to, and the arrangements for recording, reporting them to the local authority and storing records are robust. Policies and documents associated with students' welfare, health and safety are all in place and an annual timetable for their review has been established.

Arrangements for dealing with bullying are effective. The anti-bullying policy provides clear advice and guidance for staff regarding bullying in its different forms and how to deal with it. The health and safety of students and staff is maintained through the implementation of an appropriate set of policies that have been drawn up in accordance with the latest government guidance, including those relating to first aid, fire safety and the maintenance of fire-fighting equipment. Regular practice evacuations are correctly recorded. Practice evacuations continue to take place even when there are no students on roll to ensure that staff are always fully prepared for new students.

Leadership and management

Good

Leadership and management are good. This ensures that students are able to achieve well and return to local authority education. Leaders focus effectively on improving the school and on its readiness to take new students through conducting frequent reviews of the school's provisions. Leaders and managers ensure that all of the regulations for independent schools are met. Since the change of ownership, leaders have continued to build upon previous good practice, focusing on improving the quality of teaching further through even better management of staff performance. For example, teachers are required to demonstrate levels of competency in line with the government produced Teachers' Standards. Teachers demonstrate their competencies at other schools owned by the proprietor when there are no students on this school's roll. Furthermore, there is now a clearer link between performance and teachers' pay through the bonus scheme rewarding improved practice. Teachers are given suitable training in accordance with their development needs and the school's priorities to help them improve their skills further. Clear plans are in place to upgrade the system for checking students' learning and progress so that the information is more accessible to staff. These actions show that there is clear evidence that the school can continue to improve.

Leaders evaluate the quality of the school regularly and have established a framework to plan for improvement. Priorities identified by leaders and managers are mainly in line with the findings of the inspection, for example, to support teachers in making better use of the information about what students have learnt. However, in order to improve the school further leaders must establish even better systems capable of fully understanding its strengths and weaknesses in readiness for when new students join school.

When students are on roll, the good curriculum operated by the school enables students to make good gains in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and this supports their good personal development. The premises and accommodation of the school are entirely suitable and all regulations are met; physical education takes place at a sports centre with all related activities fully risk assessed. Suitable arrangements are in place to provide information to parents, carers and others including in respect of those students with a statement of special educational needs. The procedure for handling complaints complies with the regulations.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	131436
Inspection number	420229
DfE registration number	354/6025

This inspection was carried out 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.

Type of school	Special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
School status	Independent
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	0
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Advanced Childcare
Chair	Riz Khan
Headteacher	Olufemi Onasanya
Date of previous school inspection	3 February 2010

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