

Trax Academy

Clifton Drive North, Lytham St Annes, Lancashire, FY8 2PP

Inspection dates	8–10 October 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	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- Good leadership and management have ensured that the quality of teaching is of a high standard, achievement is good and significant improvements have been made to students' welfare, health and safety and behaviour since the last inspection.
- Teaching is good and this ensures that students achieve well in developing their language, reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- The school's good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures that students develop their personal and social skills well.
- Students enjoy the good curriculum and its emphasis on learning based on practical experiences, especially in motor vehicle related studies.
- Outstanding provision for the health, safety and well-being of students ensures that they feel very safe, secure and highly valued.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Teachers do not always communicate the learning outcomes they expect students to accomplish in lessons.
- There are not enough opportunities across the curriculum for students to achieve outstandingly in developing their information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

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

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed five lessons taught by three different teachers. The inspector looked at students' work and held meetings with the headteacher, staff and students.
- The school's documentation was checked including schemes of work, teachers' planning, records of students' progress, assessment records and documentation concerning school development planning and self-evaluation. The school's welfare, health, safety and safeguarding policies and procedures were also looked at.
- There were no Parent View responses. Ofsted questionnaire responses from staff were analysed.

Inspection team

Saleem Hussain, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school opened in 2006. It is a small mixed independent special school which provides for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and is registered for up to 12 boys and girls aged from 11 to 18 years. There are currently five students on roll.
- All students are looked after young people who reside in accommodation run by the TRAX group and who have been placed at the school by a number of local authorities. Students' behaviour has typically led to exclusion from their previous schools because of poor behaviour and/or non attendance.
- The school is part of a small group of related service providers that comprise a motor vehicle, go-karting and race track; an environmental energy company and a youth apprenticeship centre located together on a riverside site near Preston. The school also has a second site which is part of a windsports centre in Lytham St Anne's, 10 miles away. Basic skills teaching in English, mathematics and ICT is provided at a venue in Blackpool. This provision is not owned by the TRAX group.
- A very small minority of current students are girls. A small number of students have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school offers a vocationally based alternative curriculum and aims to re-engage students in learning, foster positive attitudes to work and equip students with specific skills related to motor vehicle engineering that will provide a route into employment.
- The school has no religious affiliation.
- The proprietor is also the headteacher.
- The school was last inspected in April 2010.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching improves to outstanding by requiring teachers to always specify and communicate to students the expected learning outcomes in their lesson planning.
- Ensure that the curriculum improves to outstanding by planning more ICT skills development opportunities across the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Achievement is good because teaching and the curriculum are good at each site used by the school. Students make good, sustained progress in most areas of learning over time in relation to their starting points and capabilities. They learn well because adults provide outstanding levels of day-to-day care, guidance and support. Many students are attracted to the school by its motor vehicle-related curriculum which contains imaginative experiences for them in all of the required areas of learning. Students are achieving equally well. This includes boys, girls, those with statements of special educational needs and students over the age of 16. Classroom support is supplemented by speech, language, occupational and other therapy in school.

Teachers assess students daily and this is effective in identifying weaknesses in learning. Teaching is then reshaped to address these weaknesses. Consequently, students gain knowledge quickly and develop a secure understanding of the work in different areas of learning. The school places a strong emphasis on developing basic skills in language, reading, writing and mathematics. For example, in a motorcycle maintenance lesson, there were many opportunities for speaking, reading, writing and mathematics. School records indicate that students are successfully closing gaps in their education with their peers in other schools and engaging in learning effectively. Students are gaining good vocational and work-related experiences according to their interests and career aspirations. Previous school leavers all gained a number of external accreditations by the time they left. Current students are undertaking a wide variety of accreditations including motor vehicle related, English, mathematics, ICT, history, art, personal skills and social skills. Records indicate that they are making good progress at each site towards achieving these qualifications. These factors ensure that students develop a wide range of skills so that they are well prepared for their future economic well-being.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Pupils' behaviour, attitudes and personal development are good. Attendance is good for most students. All students have made good improvements in their attendance and punctuality since starting at this school and this reflects their enjoyment of learning here. Students' consistently good behaviour makes a strong contribution to good learning in lessons. This helps students to achieve well and makes a strong contribution to the ethos of the school. Students respond well to the school's high expectations regarding hard work and personal conduct. Staff and students say that poor behaviour or disruption is unusual and instances of bullying are rare. Students have a good awareness of different forms of bullying including that which is ICT and mobile phone based. They say that bullying is not a significant issue and are very confident about approaching staff if they feel bullied or harassed by anyone. They say that they feel very safe at school. School records provide evidence that the number of serious incidents of misbehaviour are reducing over time. Students confirm this and say that this is because the school helps students to come to terms with and manage their anger when they become frustrated.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. There are many opportunities for students' personal development through personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) and other lessons, educational visits and visitors. Raising students' aspirations, confidence and self-esteem lies at the heart of the school's work. Adults take every opportunity to praise students for their hard work and this helps them to develop their self-belief effectively. Lessons provide many good opportunities for students to reflect on important issues in their education and in their lives. Students develop a clear understanding of right and wrong. They often consider issues such as human rights, equality and students' behaviour in a moral context. Students recently debated whether it is reasonable for people of the Sikh faith to wear a turban instead of a helmet when driving a motorcycle, because of their religious beliefs. They made

responsible and reasoned judgements about this dilemma and considered the law in this area. Social development is good. Students are cooperative and develop good manners. They learn to work with and respect others. There are good opportunities to develop teamwork skills through classroom tasks and team sports in physical education. A good number of educational visits to different museums, towns and cities ensure that students develop a good awareness of their own cultural heritage. Students are respectful of different cultures and develop tolerance for different cultural traditions and values. Leaders are aware that students would like to deepen their understanding of different beliefs in modern Britain further and a programme of visits to different places of worship is underway.

Students make a good contribution to the wider community. For example, they actively support many charities by fundraising through initiatives such as car washing and by providing horticultural services. The school provides students with a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England. For example, students learn about parliament and democracy. There is no evidence that any political views are presented to students in an unbalanced way.

Quality of teaching

Good

The quality of teaching is consistently good. This ensures that all students make good progress and achieve well over time. Teachers know students preferred learning styles, prior attainment, capabilities and special educational needs well. This helps them to plan lessons which match students' needs and interests closely. Students respond and engage well in lessons because teachers have high expectations and want them to achieve well. Teaching methods are effective, offering good levels of challenge to everyone. Behaviour management is good and this ensures that students develop good attitudes towards learning and stay on task. Praise, encouragement and rewards are well used to motivate students. Any disruptive behaviour is managed effectively. The teaching of language, spelling, reading, writing and mathematics is good. It is a feature of many lessons. For example, lessons around motor vehicle mechanics include many opportunities to develop writing skills and teachers insist on improvements from the previous lesson. Teachers' good questioning and prompting skills ensure that students work hard, learn to think for themselves and develop their initiative as they learn. For example, in a lesson about Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the teacher's skilful questioning ensured that students drew inferences about the characters and events for themselves. Lessons are brisk and this ensures that students get through a good amount of work over time. Learning resources are plentiful and teachers use these well to support learning. However, although lesson planning is generally good, teachers do not always specify and communicate their expected learning outcomes to students. Consequently, students do not learn outstandingly over time.

Assessment is good. An initial assessment of students' skills in English and mathematics and their personal and social skills is followed by regular, accurate assessments in these and other areas of learning. Records of achievement are regularly updated by teachers and subsequent teaching is modified where required. Teachers provide useful feedback on how to improve through marking workbooks and regular progress reports to parents and carers.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The curriculum and other activities are good. This ensures that students' needs are met and helps them to achieve well. The school's curriculum is well organised and supported effectively by clear and detailed schemes of work and other planning which illustrates how students of all ages and capabilities are to be challenged and supported. The curriculum provides many practically-based and enjoyable experiences which students say attracts them to the school. There is a good balance between academic and personal development opportunities. Provision for language, reading, writing and mathematical skills development is good. Many external accreditations are on offer to help students to become well prepared for their future economic well-being and independence. Provision for personal development is good. It meets the needs of all students including those over

the age of 16.

There are many good opportunities to learn about sex, relationships, drugs and health and safety. There are strong links with Connexions. A member of staff from this agency attends the school regularly to support students in making choices about careers, further education and training. The range of vocational training experiences and work-related experiences offered by the school is very good. For example, students can gain valuable experience in motor vehicle engineering, fork-lift truck driving, catering, office administration, horticulture and hairdressing according to their aspirations. Educational visits and visitors make a strong contribution to learning. For example, visitors include the police and prison service which supports learning about personal safety and the law, including criminal and civil law. However, although there are a number of planned opportunities for students to achieve well in ICT skills development, there are not enough for them to achieve outstandingly in this area.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Outstanding

Provision for students' welfare, health, safety and safeguarding is outstanding. All of the regulations in these regards are met and the school has effectively implemented all of the required policies. The school's procedures comply fully with statutory requirements and the latest guidance. Policies and procedures are reviewed regularly and changes are made where improvements are needed. Safeguarding policies are effective. Arrangements for staff recruitment are of a very high standard. Leaders are fully trained in safer recruitment. The school carries out all of the required checks to ensure that all adults in school are suitable to work with students and these are recorded as required on a single central register. The designated officer for child protection and all other staff are trained to the required standard regarding child protection. In addition to the child protection officer, several staff have received safeguarding training to the standard required for designated officers. Many staff are extensively trained in administering first aid (significantly more than is required by law). Risk assessments for the premises, learning activities and educational visits are carefully attended to. This ensures that students learn safely and any risks are managed effectively. The school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. It has a detailed fire risk policy and systems in place for the inspection and maintenance of fire alarms, extinguishers and electrical equipment at each site.

All staff are highly committed to students' well-being and consider this to be of paramount importance. Day-to-day care, guidance and support are exceptionally good and the school works very closely with external agencies such as the health authority. Students enjoy healthy lifestyles and take-up rates in activities such as windsports, go-karting and outdoor pursuits are very good. There are many very good opportunities to develop students' awareness and understanding of how they can keep themselves safe. A detailed policy is in place to eliminate bullying and this is effective. Arrangements to promote good behaviour are effective with good use made of rewards, certificates and treats.

Leadership and management

Good

Leadership and management are good and ensures that students achieve well. The senior leadership team have established a strong sense of common purpose across the school and residential settings. The proprietor/headteacher consistently communicates high expectations and ambition to all staff through regular meetings. Senior leaders work tirelessly and passionately in the best interests of students. The effectiveness of the school's leadership can be seen in the consistently high quality of teaching (all of the lessons observed were good); a vibrant and attractive curriculum; outstanding provision for welfare, health and safety and highly committed staff. In addition, the effectiveness can also be seen in the improvements since the last inspection. The school was judged as being good at that time. Improvements include provision for welfare, health and safety and also behaviour. Furthermore, several regulatory failures have now been resolved. Teaching is good as a result of effective monitoring and strong performance

management. Staff confirm that arrangements for their professional development are good. The good curriculum ensures that students have many opportunities to gain external accreditations and develop vocational skills to support their future economic well-being. Leaders ensure that there is always a strong emphasis on developing students' basic skills in language, reading, spelling, writing and mathematics. Consequently, students make good progress in these areas. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Self-evaluation is effective. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses and what it must do to become outstanding. The proprietor holds senior leaders to account for all aspects of the school's performance through regular reporting requirements for each educational site. The proprietor acknowledges that reports have not always included enough information and data regarding students' achievements and he has now remedied this by prescribing exactly what is required.

The school works positively with parents and carers, local authorities and external agencies to achieve positive benefits for students. The school's very good premises and accommodation are very well maintained. All of the requirements regarding the provision of information for parents, carers and others and for the complaints procedures are met. The proprietor has ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.

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	131563
Inspection number	422726
DfE registration number	888/6093

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 Day school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	11–18 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	5
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Edward Sloane
Headteacher	Edward Sloane
Date of previous school inspection	28–29 April 2010
Annual fees (day pupils)	£45,000
Telephone number	01253 789116
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