

Oracle

Unit 2 Dane Valley Mill, Havannah Street, Congleton, CW12 2AH

Inspection dates	3–5 December 2013	
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Pupils' achievement	Outstanding	1
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Quality of curriculum	Outstanding	1
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

This school is outstanding because

- Students achieve exceptional standards and make outstanding progress as a result of outstanding teaching and an outstanding curriculum.
- Behaviour is outstanding; rare instances of challenging behaviour are managed by staff exceptionally well. Provision for students' personal development and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are exceptional.
- Provision for the welfare, health and safety of students is outstanding. Robust policies and procedures are implemented very effectively ensuring that students are exceptionally well cared for and supported at all times.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. Senior leaders lead a drive for excellence resulting in outstanding teaching and outcomes for students.

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 a full day's notice.
- The inspector observed seven lessons taught by three different teachers. The inspector looked at students' work and held meetings with the proprietors, senior managers, teachers, parents and students.
- The inspector looked at the school's documentation including schemes of work, teachers' planning, records of students' progress, assessment records and records pertaining to the professional development of staff. He checked the school's compliance with the regulations for independent schools.
- The inspector took account of the views expressed in five questionnaires returned by staff, six by parents and carers and four questionnaires completed by students.

Inspection team

Chanan Tomlin, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school was founded in September 2006 as part of Oracle Care Ltd. Situated within a former mill in Congleton, the school provides special education for boys and girls aged between seven and 18 years. Three of the six students currently on roll are under 16 years of age and have a statement of special educational needs; all have complex social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- All students are looked after in separately registered Oracle residential homes, having been placed there by local authorities from a wide area. The students' previous experiences of education have been turbulent and fragmentary.
- The school aims primarily, 'to bring about a change in behaviour and social skills through a consistent and integrated approach. It functions as the "hub" of Oracle Care Ltd. which is a specialist residential care service designed to support young people aged between 7 and 18 years who have complex needs requiring support, education and therapeutic intervention'.
- The primary aim of the curriculum is 'to prepare students for positive citizenship, thus improving their life chances post-16 and enabling them to develop independence and employability'.
- The school was last inspected in December 2010.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all teaching is consistently outstanding by giving teachers more opportunities to share outstanding practice.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Outstanding

Achievement is outstanding as a result of outstanding teaching and an excellent curriculum. Students join the school with a range of starting points as a result of disruptions to their learning, most with levels well below national standards. Taking account of their starting points and capabilities, almost all students, including those that are disabled, those with special educational needs, looked after children and those that are more able, make rapid and sustained progress over time. Students re-engage in education soon after they join the school and quickly make up on lost ground. As a result, they are able to reach their potential and are well equipped for the next stage of their lives.

Assessment and tracking systems for English and mathematics show that almost all past students made at least expected progress and a significant number exceeded this outcome, making outstanding progress. Marking and test results for all other subjects, including science and information and communication technology (ICT), indicate past students achieved exceptionally well and made excellent progress. Assessment and tracking systems for most of the current students show that they are exceeding expected progress in English and mathematics. A small number of current students that joined the school very recently have yet to undertake baseline assessments. However, marking and test results for these students indicate that they are exceeding expected progress in all subjects.

All students learn exceptionally well and produce high-quality work; they acquire knowledge quickly and develop their understanding rapidly in a wide range of different subjects. They play a dynamic role in their learning, offer ideas and respond to challenges with great enthusiasm. They show high levels of independence, imagination and concentration. Standards in reading for all students exceed national averages. Students apply a wide range of skills competently including reading, writing, communication and mathematics; as a result, they are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment. Students that are very able attain high standards and make exceptional progress considering their starting points and circumstances.

Since the last inspection, all students finished school with a good number of externally moderated qualifications and some with GCSEs. All students continued on to further education, employment, training or voluntary work.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Outstanding

Students' behaviour and personal development are outstanding. All students have experienced serious setbacks in the past resulting in profound difficulties in terms of their emotional, social and behavioural development. After joining the school, they make great strides in the ways that they communicate and interact with each other and staff. Students' attitudes towards learning and their behaviour in lessons and around school are exemplary. They are consistently thoughtful about the ways that they behave; this is an outstanding factor in their successful learning and contributes to an extremely purposeful environment where students thrive. Students are enthusiastic about learning and fully engage in lessons. They concentrate and apply themselves to tasks fully; they work well together and volunteer ideas readily. Usually lessons proceed without disruption; on the rare occasions when students present challenging behaviour, they are calmed down and re-engage in learning quickly. During the inspection, one parent said that 'the school is 100% supportive in helping my son deal with his behaviours!'

Students have good knowledge of the different forms of bullying and take action to prevent it from occurring; as a result, bullying is very rare. All students say that they feel safe in school at all times; they are highly aware of how to keep themselves and others safe. The school day and

lessons start punctually; overall, attendance is good and improving and this has a strong impact on students' learning and achievement.

Students make exceptional progress in managing their anger and social behaviour as a result of the excellent guidance, support and therapies provided by the school and this has a strong impact on their achievements and progress. Provision for students' personal development is exceptional. Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is exemplary. Staff make every effort to help students identify and build on the subjects and skills that they can excel at. Students are encouraged to take initiatives and make calculated decisions. As a result, they grow in self-esteem and self-confidence and develop high aspirations for the future. Students contribute to the school community through an active students' council through which students' ideas are expressed and acted upon. Students integrate within the local community through excursions such as shopping trips and raising funds for charity. They took part in a residential 'Citizenship Programme' and volunteered by walking dogs at a local rescue centre, clearing rubbish and building walls for the National Trust. Students took part in a 'Fire Respect Course' that helped them contribute to the community through assisting the local fire services in fire prevention.

Students become aware of spirituality through art, assemblies, discussions with teachers and daily times for reflection. Correct moral and social behaviour is emphasised by the school at every turn throughout the day. Students discuss issues related to morality and balanced decision-making with teachers regularly and the school encourages students to socialise with their peers in and out of school. Social interactions are very carefully monitored and students receive valuable guidance on interactions that are acceptable and those that are not. As a result, students develop excellent social skills and are courteous and welcoming. Students learn about their own culture and public services through history, geography and personal, social and health education (PSHE). They learn about political issues in a balanced way; as a result, they learn to make reasoned and sensible decisions and are well-prepared for life in British society. Leaders ensure that when controversial and political issues are considered, steps have been taken to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views. They learn about other cultures through geography, art, food technology and 'cultural evenings'. They have visited different places of worship in the past and the school intends to arrange more of these visits in the future. Consequently, students are interested in different cultures and faiths, develop respect and tolerance for all people and challenge racism.

Quality of teaching

Outstanding

Teaching is outstanding; the impact of this is that all students achieve exceptionally well and make rapid and sustained progress. Much of the teaching observed during the inspection was outstanding and never less than consistently good; all lessons included some outstanding features. More opportunities for teachers to share outstanding teaching practices and strategies would raise the quality of even more teaching to consistently outstanding. Teachers convey consistently high expectations to students; they plan and teach lessons that enable students to learn exceptionally well in all areas of the curriculum. Teachers check students' understanding throughout lessons systematically and effectively and anticipate where they may need to intervene and this has a notable impact on the quality of learning. Reading, writing, communication and mathematics are taught highly effectively; these subjects are planned cohesively and implemented in all subjects for all students ensuring that students receive a well-rounded education with firm grounding in all of these essential subject areas. Teachers possess a thorough knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses and plan lessons capably to ensure continuity and progression. As a result, all students are appropriately challenged and enabled to make outstanding progress.

Teachers successfully generate high levels of participation and commitment to learning among students, most of whom have not engaged in education for long periods of time. This has a highly positive impact on their achievements and progress. Examples of this are an outstanding PSHE lesson where students learned about basic first-aid through excellent role-play and an outstanding mathematics lesson where students learned about probability through engaging in a competition.

Marking is of a high quality; it always highlights achievement and areas that need to improve. Teachers consistently offer constructive criticism to students; as a result, students consider ideas carefully and are keen to produce high quality work. Students are tested regularly and teachers have established excellent systems to monitor and track achievement and progress; students assess their own achievements and progress together with the teacher at the end of every lesson. As a result, they are routinely challenged to achieve high standards. Students are encouraged to work independently and collaboratively. Teachers use an excellent range of strategies and resources to support lessons; this, together with sharply focused intervention and support, match individual students' needs accurately resulting in outstanding learning for all students across the curriculum. Students, parents and carers agree that the school is highly proactive in ensuring that students engage and succeed. During the inspection, one parent said that before coming to this school, her son had missed a lot and was very behind especially in literacy and numeracy, but after being in this school he 'has come along in leaps and bounds!'

Quality of curriculum

Outstanding

The curriculum is outstanding. It provides highly positive memorable experiences and rich opportunities for high-quality learning. It meets the needs of all students enabling them to achieve exceedingly well and make excellent progress in all subjects. The curriculum gives students the opportunity to make exceptional progress in all subject areas and especially in developing their reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills. The curriculum is supported with excellent schemes of work that contain carefully detailed plans to challenge all students including disabled students, those that have special educational needs, including those with a statement of special educational needs and the more able. Activities for all year groups in all subjects are planned to ensure rapid progression from one level and competency to another. An experienced careers advisor provides students with well-judged advice and guidance on future education, training and employment and all staff help students make decisions with regard to their future. Students also attend a large careers event that gives them valuable insights into the many options available to them. Advice and guidance for students who are above compulsory school age is particularly strong. As a result, students are very-well prepared for the next stage in their lives; students acknowledge this, as one said during the inspection 'school is getting us ready for the future!'

Most extra-curricular activities take place in the evenings and weekends. Although the school and residences are separately registered, school and care staff work very well together to ensure that these are rich and varied and fully meet the needs and interests of students. These activities include ice skating, theatre work, mountain biking, climbing and raft building. Students go on trips in connection with project work; these include a visit to a science centre and an 'Earth Sharing' event. The curriculum is enriched through visitors to the school such as an 'Animal Lab' when students and staff observed and held a variety of reptiles including snakes and giant snails. PSHE is excellent; this subject helps students understand issues related to their personal well-being effectively and enables them to make important life decisions with due consideration. PSHE and the wider curriculum help students become well-rounded individuals that are knowledgeable about a wide range of issues and are keen to expand their experiences and pursue new interests.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Outstanding

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of students is outstanding and all of the independent school standards are met. The school has established robust policies and procedures that comply fully with current legislation and guidance. Policies and procedures including the policy to tackle bullying are rigorously and consistently implemented and monitored regularly to secure improvement. The school is proactive in its approach to safeguarding and enables students to understand how they can keep themselves and each other safe. Arrangements for safeguarding are of a very high standard and are regularly reviewed. The school implements its child protection

policy very effectively. All staff and proprietors have received enhanced clearances to work with children through the Disclosure and Barring Service; these and all other required checks are included in a comprehensive single central register. The designated person for child protection and all staff have attended the required training at the required levels. Arrangements for recruitment are extremely robust; during induction, new staff receive clear guidance on child protection procedures and on how to keep students safe at all times.

Students are exceptionally well cared for. Staff are fully committed to providing the highest levels of care and support. They have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and commonly undertake a broad range of training related to health and safety to keep up to date. A number of staff members are trained in first-aid to high levels. The school has a very good level of fire safety; it has prepared a detailed fire risk assessment and all equipment is checked and serviced regularly. Fire drills are conducted regularly and are recorded appropriately. Risk assessments for individual students, the premises and trips are very comprehensive. Supervision is consistently excellent and arrangements are in place to ensure that all students are always safe. The school is an inclusive community where students develop strong relationships with each other and staff and all feel safe and valued. Students routinely enjoy healthy lifestyles and adopt practices that ensure their own safety. Parents and carers have full confidence in the school's procedures for welfare, health and safety.

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Leadership and management are outstanding. Senior leaders are highly successful in their drive to ensure that activities meet the needs of students exceptionally well and to maintain exceptionally high levels of achievement for students of all abilities over a sustained period of time. Leaders and managers have high expectations for students; they expect students to attain high standards and convey this to them consistently. This contributes to an outstanding learning environment where students achieve exceptionally well and make excellent progress. School leaders have a very clear understanding of students' skills and abilities and the school's strengths and areas that need to improve. They have produced a detailed self-assessment and a realistic development plan that are used very effectively to take actions and improve the provision as necessary. An external advisor attends twice a year to carry out quality assurance checks and advise senior leaders on all aspects of the provision. Senior leaders and teachers uphold high professional standards and frequently introduce new initiatives to benefit students. Staff have great confidence in students and treat them with respect; this is reciprocated by students, resulting in an atmosphere where students have extremely positive attitudes towards learning and are consistently keen to achieve high standards.

Senior leaders have produced outstanding policies which ensure that students achieve high standards in literacy. They have produced a curriculum that provides students with memorable experiences and excellent opportunities for high-quality learning; this has a highly positive impact on students' behaviour and personal development and the high standards that they achieve. Senior leaders place great emphasis on improving teaching and learning through challenging and supporting teachers to perfect the methods that they use to teach and the ways that they use school resources. Consequently, teaching is outstanding and students achieve high standards and make excellent progress. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This has a very positive impact on students' self-esteem, self-confidence and the ways that students interact with each other and with people that are different from them.

The premises and accommodation are well-suited to support the curriculum. All areas of the school are well-maintained and decorated to a good standard; the school is in the process of refurbishing a science laboratory and a 'quiet room', also to high standards. The school meets all of the requirements with regard to the provision of information to parents and carers and the complaints procedure meets the requirements. Senior leaders work extremely well with parents, carers and external agencies to help students succeed in all areas of their learning. During the inspection, one

parent/carer said that she is always kept very well informed about how her son is doing and is thoroughly impressed with the school. Senior leaders have ensured that arrangements for safeguarding are robust and fully meet statutory requirements. Resources are used very well to benefit all groups of students.

School leaders have ensured that all 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	134725
Inspection number	422771
DfE registration number	895/6035

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	Independent special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	7–18 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	6
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Mr Ravi Raj Maheswaran (Oracle Care Ltd)
Chair	Mr Carmine Bianco
Headteacher	Mrs Tracy Whitehurst
Date of previous school inspection	1–2 December 2010
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,900
Telephone number	0870 850 2949
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	info@oraclecare.com

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