

Blue Mountain Education

Willow Farm, Off Newton Lane, Cossall, NG16 2SD

Inspection dates	11-13 June 2014	
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils	Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching	Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management	Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students make expected progress in English and mathematics but progress is slower in science, information and communication and technology (ICT). This is because resources are not always used well and the work is sometimes too easy. Few students gain qualifications in these subjects.
- Marking and oral feedback do not always explain to students what they have done well and what they could do to improve.
- Post-16 students make the progress expected. However the school does not rigorously check on how well they are doing in the qualifications they take off-site and how successfully they continue in education or gain employment.
- Sometimes a few students lose concentration and do not produce much work.
- Senior leaders check the quality of teaching, but do not gather evidence systematically enough to show that teachers have met their personal targets.
- Leaders monitor students' achievement on a week by week basis but do not use this information effectively to fully evaluate students' progress over time.
- Actions identified in the school improvement plan are not sufficiently linked to improving students' achievement within a set period of time.

The school has the following strengths

- Students feel secure in school and staff successfully keep them safe. Their behaviour improves because of committed care and guidance from staff and teachers' effective behaviour management.
- Students' self-esteem increases at the school because staff encourage them to try new activities and students benefit when they succeed.
- All staff form a strong partnership and work together effectively to develop the school.
- Students' attendance is improving and is broadly average. This is because rewards and sanctions are used thoughtfully and because staff successfully re engage them with education.

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 inspector observed teaching in five lessons or sessions.
- Discussions were held with the proprietor, headteacher, school staff, care staff, students and a representative from a local authority.
- The inspector observed students' behaviour and scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures. The inspector looked at work in books and folders for literacy and mathematics for all students. Some case studies of students who attend the school were studied.
- No responses to the online Parent View survey were submitted.
- The inspector observed the work of the school and looked at documentation including teachers' planning, the school's development plan, care plans and checks on students' progress. Arrangements for managing the performance of staff were discussed.

Inspection team

Jackie Cousins, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Blue Mountain Education is an independent special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social needs. It opened in April 2006 and is owned by Blue Mountain Homes.
- The school aims to develop students' personal, vocational, and academic skills so that they become sociable, active and valuable members of society.
- The school provides for up to five young people who are not attending mainstream secondary schools or, if over 16 years old, are going to college. It is registered to take students between the ages of eight and 18 years.
- The school was inspected in January 2011 and received monitoring visits in October 2011, February 2012 and June 2012.
- There are five boys and girls on roll. The students currently on roll are aged between 13 and 17 years of age and often have a background of disrupted education. Some have additional learning needs such as in literacy or mathematics. All of the students live in Blue Mountain Homes.
- One of the students has a statement of special educational needs.
- There is a small farm on site managed by the children's home and used by students for rearing goats, rabbits, chickens and guinea pigs, and growing vegetables.
- A new headteacher was appointed in September 2013.
- The care provided by the children's home (SC047978) nearby was inspected at the same time as the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact of teaching on students' achievement, especially the most able and those over 16 years of age, by ensuring that:
 - more students gain qualifications in science and ICT
 - all staff challenge students effectively to reach the next stage of development
 - resources for science and ICT are developed and used well
 - all students are expected to apply themselves successfully and increase the amount and quality of work they produce
 - marking and oral feedback explain to students what they have done effectively and could do to improve.
- Develop the leadership and management of the school by making sure that:
 - all staff help to gather evidence that they have met their personal targets to improve their teaching skills
 - school improvement plans include specific and measurable targets for how much progress students are expected to make over a given period of time
 - information gathered as to students' progress is analysed effectively to evaluate how well students are doing over time
 - the school gathers data as to how well students do in post-16 college courses and when they go on to the next stage of education or the work place.

Inspection judgements

Achievement of pupils

Requires improvement

- Boys and girls, especially the most able, do not achieve as successfully in science and ICT as they do in other key subjects. This is because the subjects are not systematically taught, resourced and valued. Few students gain qualifications in these subjects.
- Students make the progress expected from their starting points in English and mathematics. They gain Functional Skills qualifications at the Higher Levels (1 and 2). This is because practical activities are used thoughtfully. For instance, boys and girls answered questions in detail about an application form which showed they understood the information they needed to add to complete the form. They wrote full sentences using appropriate spelling, punctuation and grammar skills when they filled in a complex application form.
- Mathematics achievement too is in line with that expected, although sometimes from lower starting points in mathematics than in English. Work in folders shows that students are working at Entry Level 2 and 3 and a few students gain the Functional Skills qualification at Level 1 or 2.
- Students' personal development improves noticeably during their time in school. They become more confident about trying new activities. Oral communication skills develop steadily and they learn to explain their thinking carefully. They talk enthusiastically about how they have changed the ways they work since they started to attend the school.
- Staff find out about students' interests and plan many activities which will intrigue and fascinate them. This all helps students who may have been disaffected previously to reengage with education. Projects often allow students to develop skills in several areas of learning at one time. For instance, students created beautiful collages of underwater scenes using design and technology, science, mathematics and literacy skills.
- The students' physical development improves through playing games such as badminton and basket ball. They develop their knowledge about healthy diets carefully because they learn to cook balanced meals. For example, they learnt to cook pizza with vegetables because of staff expertise in nutrition. Students gain vocational qualifications in first aid and food hygiene because of successful links with local providers.
- Students with additional learning needs make effective progress because individual learning programmes and one-to-one tuition are used well to develop their basic skills. Discrimination is not tolerated and students have equal opportunities to learn whatever their background.
- The students who are over the age of 16 years achieve adequately in key areas of learning but few gain qualifications which employers would value. They improve their literacy and numeracy skills productively. For example, one student used fascinating vocabulary when she wrote a speech about how the education and health services should be managed by the government.
- Trips out of school enhance students' skills because they are linked suitably to subjects which they are studying. For instance, the students enjoyed a trip to see how plates were made commercially and so they learnt successfully about ways to work with clay and make pottery.

Quality of teaching**Requires improvement**

- Teaching requires improvement because sometimes staff do not expect enough from students. This means that students' rates of achievement are not enhanced as successfully as they could be in some areas of learning.
- Marking and oral feedback are not always used productively. As a result, students do not have a sufficient understanding of how they can improve their work or develop their skills so that they reach the next stage of development.
- Teachers do not consistently use science and ICT resources to extend students' skills in these subjects. This is partly because students do not always have available to them a wide enough range of high quality resources to work within these subjects.
- All staff develop positive relationship with students and so they feel comfortable and relaxed in school. One student summed up the thoughts of others when he said, 'I like coming to this school because of the ways staff get us interested in learning.'
- Practical activities are used productively and so students use their mathematics and literacy skills in a variety of subjects. For instance, one student used his reading skills successfully when he found out about how to make an interesting path decorated with mosaic tile patterns. He used his mathematics skills carefully when he measured equal gaps between the holes he drilled in the pieces of hardboard which he used to create the edges of the path.
- Students' levels of skills in key areas of learning are checked methodically when they start at the school so that staff can help them to fill in the gaps in their knowledge. Staff plan work for students using this information effectively.
- Post-16 students learn to plan and research ideas effectively before they start on projects, such as renovating old furniture, because staff help them to see the importance of such planning and make the topics highly relevant to their interests.

Behaviour and safety of pupils**Requires improvement**

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. This is because sometimes they do not apply themselves and so the quality and quantity of work they produce is not assisting them to develop all basic skills equally well. These students do not focus on their work productively and they become a little distracted for short periods.
- Projects are planned to support all areas of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Topics studied and visits made support this effectively. The school plans suitable topics to develop students' knowledge of public services and institutions. However there is less emphasis on students' understanding of the values and beliefs of different groups of people in our multi-cultural society. The school is working hard to address this.
- Students' self-esteem increases while they attend the school and so they learn to approach new tasks in positive ways. If students become frustrated while developing new skills, staff calmly discuss ways to handle such times and introduce them to strategies for managing unfamiliar situations. This means that students' behaviour improves well.
- Most students are polite and thoughtful young people. They really appreciate the ways staff

work with them and say they treat them fairly. One student said, 'Staff really listen to you.' As a result, students learn to carefully consider the impact of their actions on others. Racial incidents are rare. Exclusions are reducing and there have been no exclusions since September 2013.

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students know how to handle equipment safely because of staff guidance. They know what to do if there is an emergency in school and precautions to take when using equipment or to protect themselves from any harmful effects in the environment.
- Bullying is rare and students say that staff sort out any problems they have with others. The students know how to keep themselves safe on the internet and understand how to stop cyber bullying. Students are safeguarded because staff are well trained in child protection.
- Students become useful citizens. For instance, they know how to look after animals such as sheep, chickens, guinea pigs and donkeys because they help out in the school farm with staff support. They understand women's rights and how past women fought to get the right to vote.
- Students' attendance and punctuality have improved well and they are broadly in line with what is expected. This is due to the fact that senior leaders and staff check these carefully and apply sanctions and rewards rigorously. Students themselves acknowledge how much more committed they are now to taking part in education.

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The proprietor has ensured that all the independent school regulations are met. The proprietor monitors the work of school staff carefully, supporting those who perform less well and rewarding those who are more successful. The impact of their work is checked by the proprietor, but staff do not yet systematically gather evidence to show how they have met their personal targets and enhanced their teaching skills. This means that staff do not all improve their skills as effectively as they could.
- Since the last inspection, the proprietor, with some external support, has methodically improved the quality of teaching and planning. The school is always looking for ways to improve and knows how well it is doing. However targets in the school development plan are not all specific and measurable and in particular do not lay out how much progress students are expected to make in a set period of time.
- Data is used adequately by the proprietor, headteacher and senior staff to see how well the school is performing. The school checks on the levels of students' skills when they arrive at the school. However, staff do not record overall how much progress the students make while they attend the school nor do they keep records as to how well they do when they leave.
- The proprietor and school staff quickly form positive relationships with students. Each student is treated as a unique individual and is involved in school life successfully. Care plans are utilized rigorously to ensure that all students' needs are met, including any medical needs.
- School staff work methodically with residential staff to provide stable and productive lives for students. Meetings to review care for students are attended by school staff. This means that they work together with outside agencies and staff from the children's homes to refine

provision for each student.

- The leadership ensures that statements of special educational needs targets are followed carefully by all staff. As a result students' progress is sound in key areas of learning.
- Staff offer students valuable careers advice and support them when they write their curriculum vita or apply for jobs. Some students successfully take part in work experience. For example, one student has taken up a part-time job with a local company which she was offered after she completed work experience there.
- The leadership of the post-16 provision requires improvement because, although it makes sure students can access suitable courses at colleges when they are ready, some do have to return to school based courses if the college course does not suit them. The range of subjects available in the school for them is limited, particularly for the more able.
- All procedures and policies are followed effectively. Health and safety issues are acted on efficiently. For instance, fire alarms are checked regularly and a clear log of when these checks occurred is kept. Risk assessments are used rigorously to safeguard everyone. Safeguarding requirements are met. Staff are regularly trained in child protection and first aid. Any accidents or incidents involving students are recorded carefully and shared with staff in their residential home. A single central record is kept of all the checks carried out on staff including their qualifications and identity that meets all requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website:
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School details

Unique reference number	131536
Inspection number	122587
DfE registration number	891/6026

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 status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	5
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Pradeep Manaktala
Headteacher	Mrs Charlotte Hextall
Date of previous school inspection	January 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£25,000
Telephone number	0115 932 1153
Fax number	n/a
Email address	Bluemountaineducation@BTconnect.com

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