

# Nisai Learning Hub (Nottingham)

Unit 2, Lockwood Close, Nottingham, NG5 9JN

**Inspection dates** 18–20 November 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Sixth form provision	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good school because

- Senior leaders set high expectations for what the school can achieve with students whose previous attitudes to school have been very negative.
- The proprietor and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development.
- Students make good progress with their learning, mostly starting from low levels of previous attainment. They develop skills in English and mathematics which prepare them well to move on to further education and employment.
- Students' attitudes to learning and their attendance at school improve significantly once they have settled into the routines of the school.
- The school provides an innovative and effective curriculum which combines interesting courses in academic and vocational subjects. Students achieve good success in both.
- The quality of teaching is good in both on-line academic subjects and in the range of suitable vocational courses provided.
- Good attention is given to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They are prepared well for adult life in modern Britain.
- The school provides a safe and secure environment in which robust attention is given to the welfare of students.
- The sixth form provision effectively prepares students for further education courses.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is not outstanding. The quality of teachers' questioning skills and the attention to the needs of students with special educational needs are not consistent across all subjects.
- Students do not have sufficient first-hand opportunities to experience the diversity of cultures and activities in the local and wider communities.
- The extent and rate of students' progress is not compared sufficiently with national expectations.

### 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 was conducted with one day's notice. The inspector observed nine lessons taught by nine teachers, together with parts of three additional lessons.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and the company's director of education as well as a number of members of staff. Conversations also took place with a number of students.
- Telephone conversations or face-to-face meetings were held with five parents or carers and two representatives of placing schools. There were insufficient responses to the Ofsted on-line Parent View questionnaire for these to be taken into consideration. Questionnaires completed by 10 members of staff were considered.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents, including policies and records, data about students' achievement, samples of students' work and the school's self-evaluation and development plan.

## Inspection team

David Young, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Nisai Learning Hub (Nottingham) is a school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. It provides full-time education for students in the age range 14 to 19 years who are dually registered with placing schools in the locality. The majority of students have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion from their base schools.
- The school is registered to admit up to 35 boys and girls; there are currently 20 students on the roll of the school. Two students have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school does not make use of any additional alternative providers although all students in Year 11 are provided with opportunities for off-site work experience.
- The school was registered as an independent school in December 2013. This is its first inspection since registration.
- Nisai learning aims to 'help young people overcome barriers to learning through an innovative and unique approach to providing a different way to learn'. Provision for the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) is taught on-line by teachers employed centrally by Nisai.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding by:
  - extending the quality of questioning by on-line teachers and in-class tutors to improve the depth of students' written and oral answers
  - ensuring that students with special educational needs are able to understand and respond consistently well to the more complex ideas and concepts in some subject content.
- Ensure that all members of staff are aware of the rate and extent of students' progress over time compared with national expectations.
- Extend the range of opportunities for students to improve their social and cultural development through increased first-hand experience of the diversity of events and activities in the local and wider communities.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The quality of leadership and management is good. In the short time since it registered as an independent school, senior leaders, including the headteacher and the company's director of education, have established a school which meets the emotional and social needs of the students effectively. They ensure that all aspects of the school's work are continuously checked and improved.
- Senior leaders have introduced an effective and innovative curriculum. All students are provided with an appropriate balance between on-line learning and the development of core skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT, together with a range of vocational options. All courses are externally accredited. The range of subjects and learning activities ensure that all the required areas of learning are available to students across the full age range of the school.
- The school maintains a good dialogue with senior staff in the placing schools at which students are dually registered. This ensures a consistent approach to achieving the targets agreed with these schools, joint actions to managing any serious misbehaviour, and access to external examinations as agreed with each student's placing school.
- The school is successful in enabling disaffected young people to turn around their negative attitudes to learning and to complete courses which prepare them well for life in modern Britain. Appropriate consideration is given to students' readiness to leave the school at the end of Year 11 or following further post-16 education. Decisions are made on the basis of robust careers advice and an excellent awareness of local opportunities.
- Members of staff have responsibility for managing subject areas, for in-class tuition and mentoring of students, and for managing the behaviour of students. These roles are implemented effectively and consistently. All members of staff who completed inspection questionnaires stated that they are proud to be members of staff at the school and that the school is well led and managed.
- The headteacher has created a strong, cohesive and stable staff team. Together they have established an ethos in which students improve their behaviour and attendance, take their work seriously and achieve a range of awards and qualifications. The headteacher leads by example in ensuring that the life of the school is characterised by excellent relationships between staff and with students. As a result, students demonstrate respect and respond positively to advice.
- Overall, good attention is given to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students, including their attitudes to learning and their understanding of life in the local and wider communities. Parents and carers interviewed during this inspection demonstrate strong support for the improvements in behaviour and attitudes to attendance which they experience.
- Senior leaders have established rigorous arrangements for the safeguarding of students, including suitable staff training, safe recruitment of suitable staff, robust management of health and safety including first aid and the administration of any medicines. The school provides a safe and secure environment for all students.
- Senior leaders take a rigorous approach to the review of all aspects of the school's performance. They understand the school's strengths and have identified appropriate areas for development of the school. The areas for improvement identified during this inspection confirm and extend the priorities under current consideration by the school's leaders.
- The school's senior leaders have high expectations of what the school can achieve. The quality of the provision and outcomes already achieved indicate that they have the capacity for further improvement in all areas of the school's life.

### ■ The governance of the school:

The governance of the school is good. The proprietor and directors have set up robust arrangements for checking on the quality of teaching and the progress made by students. This includes appropriate, regular meetings between senior staff in the school and the proprietor's representatives to agree targets for improvement and to ensure that these targets are met.

The governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching in both the on-line and vocational aspects of the curriculum, and how these contribute to the successes achieved by students. A recent system has been established to manage the performance of staff, including regular observation of teaching and learning. The governors provide effective challenge to the headteacher and staff to maintain and further improve the effective work that they do with students.

A strong relationship with the company's central team of on-line tutors, and the further development of existing and new courses, is overseen by the director of education. He has a regular presence in the school and makes a strong and effective contribution to the review and improvement of all aspects of learning.

The governors have ensured that all the independent school standards have been met. These include those related to the quality of the premises and the provision of information for parents and carers, including appropriate arrangements to manage any complaints.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good; evidence available in the school demonstrates that all students have improved their behaviour since joining the school. Many enter the school with previous poor attitudes to learning and often an unwillingness to attend regularly.
- Most students quickly develop positive attitudes to their learning. They enjoy the on-line teaching of English, mathematics, science and ICT. They listen to their teachers, follow the variety of on-screen presentations, and contribute to the required procedures for answering questions and sharing their ideas.
- Students also respond positively to the support, encouragement and challenge provided by their in-class tutors. Any occasional tendency to lose concentration or to remain passive is quickly corrected by sensitive but firm interventions by tutors. Students know what is expected of them and distracting or disobedient behaviour is rare. This represents a massive improvement in behaviour for many students.
- Infrequent incidents of serious misbehaviour do occur; these are managed appropriately and consistently. Appropriate sanctions, including occasional fixed-term exclusions, are used with a strong emphasis on the requirement for students to reflect on the impact of their behaviour and to state how they intend to improve. The school's records of such incidents demonstrate that, for the small number of students involved, there is a decrease in incidents over time.
- There have been no recorded incidents of bullying in the last year. Recorded incidents of misbehaviour typically consist of over-reaction and anger in response to frustrating situations. The staff are very good at helping students understand the impact of their reactions on others, even when they believe they have been unfairly treated.
- Overall attendance is below the national average, largely as a result of poor attendance by a small number of persistent absentees. However, the attendance of most students has improved considerably from their levels in previous placements. This is largely due to the respectful and patient relationships developed with the staff.
- Students mostly respond well to the instructions and requirements of staff. They develop increased confidence in their ability to reach agreed targets and an awareness that their successes are valued and appreciated. This is evident in the quality of positive conversations around the school between students and staff. Students are proud of their work and their achievements.
- Parents, carers and staff in their placing schools speak positively about the extent to which the school

supports and challenges students to improve their attitudes and behaviour. They recognise that these improvements have a positive impact on the quality of students' learning.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe is good. The staff have created a safe environment where students feel secure and respected.
- All requirements for high quality safeguarding of students are implemented rigorously. All staff are trained to the required standard in child protection and excellent relationships have been established with local authority officers responsible for the safeguarding of students. The school's response to any safeguarding concerns takes full account of the views of placing schools and of relevant external agencies.
- Attention to the assessment of risk is robust, including for any off-site activities. All the required routine checks on fire safety are conducted diligently and within the required timescales. Arrangements for the safe recruitment of staff ensure that all the required checks are completed and that all adults are suitable to work with students. School policy documents make clear the school's commitment to ensure that any controversial political issues are addressed in a balanced and non-partisan manner.
- Good attention is given to students' social and cultural development, particularly through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Students are taught about the range of community services available to them, and how they might contribute to the local community and take an active part as citizens in a democratic society. They have responded positively to opportunities to contribute to charitable events and collections.
- Students are provided with opportunities to understand the variety of beliefs and cultures represented in the local and wider communities. Carefully selected visitors to the school have included members of the fire service, individual representatives from faith communities, and external agencies specialised in drug awareness and smoking cessation. The school's leaders are aware of the need to further increase the range of first-hand experiences available to students to engage with the local community and to develop their greater awareness of social and cultural diversity.

### The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching, in both the academic and vocational areas of learning, is good. It enables most students to make good progress from starting points which are mostly below the national average for their age.
- The academic curriculum, including English, mathematics, science and ICT, is taught effectively through on-line tuition. Lessons are provided by subject specialist teachers employed by Nisai to provide on-line tuition to small groups of students at the school, together with similar groups in one or two additional schools.
- The on-line lessons interest and engage the students in active learning. The quality of the resources and presentations is good and teachers employ a range of suitable, attractive learning activities in each lesson. Students pay good attention and respond with their own ideas and answers, either through the use of the keyboard or by on-line microphones.
- Lessons are generally well-paced to ensure that the needs of all students are catered for. The school groups students by ability for the majority of lessons and teachers are well informed about the range of learning characteristics and abilities present in each group. As a result, students with special educational needs mostly make good progress towards Level 1 or 2 awards, including GCSE examinations, in the core subjects. However, the need to simplify learning for lower attaining students is not given consistent attention in a minority of subjects and activities.
- The quality of the on-line learning provides sufficient challenge to extend and challenge more-able students. In the first year since registration as an independent school, students achieved a range of

results at GCSE in the core subjects, usually making up a lot of lost ground in one year after, typically, joining the school part way through Year 10.

- The quality of students' learning is greatly assisted by the contributions of in-school tutors who support and challenge students in their on-line classes. The combination of verbal input, by on-line teachers and in-class tutors working together, enables students to understand and reflect on the visual presentations provided.
- During the inspection, this approach resulted in effective learning, for example about ecosystems and recycling in science, and rotational symmetry in mathematics. Students made good progress with the research and design of a newspaper front page in ICT.
- Students also take an active and interested part in vocational courses. On entry to the school, appropriate decisions are made about the vocational options to be followed by each individual student. Their work in construction, sport and fitness, child care or hair and beauty is practical and relevant to life beyond school. Students enjoy these courses and achieve additional Level 1 and 2 awards which enable them to continue successfully on to courses at colleges of education.
- The curriculum for all students is enhanced through effective additional courses in physical education and PSHE, together with opportunities for aesthetic and creative experiences. Students' expressive work through spray painting adds particular colour and quality to the appearance of one classroom.
- Good opportunities are provided for students, subject to careful risk assessment, to take part in work experience. Students speak positively about how this opportunity has enabled them to find part-time employment or to prepare successfully for further study on leaving school.
- Excellent strategies for the assessment of students' progress are built into both the academic and vocational subjects. Students work is assessed accurately in line with the requirements of the awarding examination bodies. Students' timetables are carefully arranged to ensure that all have the opportunity to complete assessments and to build up a record of their achievements.
- Records of data from the assessment of students' work enable staff to identify the extent to which students are on-track to reach their agreed targets in each subject studied. This enables the staff to direct additional support and challenge when these are required.
- Work in English GCSE about war poems stimulated students to reflect and consider the imagery of the poetry and how language is used to convey meaning through metaphors. The abstract ideas required greater intervention by in-class staff and the potential of the lesson objectives was not fully exploited.
- The quality of teachers' questioning enables all students to take part, but ideas are not always fully explored and extended by the use of a variety of questioning techniques. Supporting this role can be demanding on the skills and knowledge of in-class staff who are not necessarily trained in the detail of the teachers' expectations.
- Staff are not as aware of the extent of students' progress over time and how this compares with nationally expected rates of progress. As a result, progress is not uniformly consistent across all subjects.

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- The achievement of students is good as a result of good teaching together with a varied range of subjects and learning activities well-matched to students' needs and interests.
- The great majority of students enter the school with previous attainment which is below the standard expected for their age. This is usually the result of previous poor attendance, negative attitudes to learning, or exclusion from school. The school is successful in turning around these attitudes and enabling

almost all students to achieve good success.

- Students make good progress over time from these relatively low starting points. The majority enter the school at some point in Year 10 and achieve success in GCSE subjects and externally accredited vocational courses by the end of Year 11.
- All those students who left the school from Year 11 in 2014 achieved a Level 1 or 2 qualification in their chosen vocational area of study. The majority of awards achieved by students in their academic and vocational subjects exceeded the targets set on entry to the school. Overall, their rates of progress were above the national average.
- Although two students achieved grade B awards in English in 2014, the extent of students' progress from their starting points in mathematics was better than that in English. As a result, the school's entry policy for English language and literature awards has been amended for entries in 2015.
- In 2014, the first year since the school registered as an independent school, the boys made greater progress than the girls in their GCSE subjects. Steps have been taken in the organisation of teaching groups and support provided for the girls to address this difference. Boys and girls did equally well in their vocational courses.
- The majority of students develop good reading skills which enable them to access and benefit from the on-line courses. Their reading and writing skills show good improvement and evidence of the high expectations set by the school.
- The majority of students demonstrate good progress in the application of their reading, writing and ICT skills across the range of subjects studied. Their ICT skills, in particular, benefit from the on-line approach to much of their learning.
- All but one of the fourteen students who left the school in 2014 moved on to successful placements in further education or employment with training.
- Students with identified learning needs mostly make up lost ground in English and mathematics. Occasionally, as a result of learning tasks which require simplification and greater explanation, these students do not make sufficient progress in some lessons.

### **The sixth form provision**

**is good**

- The school does not have a separate provision for post-16 students. Those who remain at the school after the age of 16 are integrated into academic and vocational courses alongside Key Stage 4 students. None of these students has yet completed a full year.
- A small number of students remain at the school for a further year after Year 11 in order to achieve the qualifications required to enter courses of further education. As a result of individual emotional and social conditions, together with disrupted previous educational experiences, these students are not ready to make the transition at the age of 16 years.
- The curriculum provided enables them to have additional time to overcome their personal barriers to learning or to develop the additional social maturity required to make a success of life after school. The quality of relationships within the school, and the individual attention provided, ensure that they are well prepared for the challenges of preparing for future employment.
- The management and leadership of the school is applied effectively to the review and evaluation of this additional provision for students over the age of 16 years.



## 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: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	140487
<b>Inspection number</b>	447302
<b>DfE registration number</b>	892/6017

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as inserted 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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Day special school
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	14–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Female
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	20
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	1
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	1
<b>Proprietor</b>	Dhruv Patel
<b>Chair</b>	Dhruv Patel
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sara Baldry
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£14,270 to £15,300
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8424 8475
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