

Young Options Pathway College, Stoke

Phoenix House, Marlborough Road, Longton, Stoke-on-Trent, ST3 1EJ

Inspection dates 2–4 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

This is an outstanding school

- Students who enter the college with negative attitudes to education achieve more than they thought possible, often in a short period of time. Once they have settled into the expectations of the college they make outstanding progress with their learning.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding and contributes strongly to students' excellent achievement. Teachers plan and provide a creative range of learning experiences and activities which engage and interest students.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary. With the exception of a very small number of students, their attendance is excellent and contributes positively to the extent and pace of their progress.
- The staff actively promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A rich programme of experiences introduces students to the diversity of cultures in the local community and gives them an effective understanding of British values.
- The college provides a safe and secure environment for students. High levels of supervision and strong, trusting relationships ensure that students can relax and enjoy their learning.
- The headteacher provides inspiring leadership which has contributed strongly to the motivation of staff and students. Outstanding ambition for students' academic and personal development drives continuous improvement in all aspects of the college's work.
- Senior leaders, including the governors, continuously check the quality of teaching and students' achievement. Plans for improvement are based on a robust and accurate knowledge of the college's strengths and weaknesses.
- The college makes excellent provision for post-16 students. These students are provided with the opportunity to fill the gaps in their learning and personal development resulting from disaffection, and often long periods of absence in previous educational settings.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was conducted with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed eight lessons taught by four teachers. The majority of these lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Responses to questionnaires from eight students, 10 parents and carers and five members of staff were considered. There were not enough responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) to evaluate views expressed online.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the proprietor's director of education, the college's improvement partner and a small number of external partners. Discussions, formal and informal, were held with students.
- A number of college policies and procedures related to students' welfare, health and safety were read, together with records of incidents, sanctions and data about students' progress and achievement.

Inspection team

David Young, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Young Options Pathway College is located in a mixed residential and commercial area of Longton, near Stoke-on Trent. It is owned by the Options Group Ltd and provides full-time education for up to 15 students in the age range 11 to 19 years; there are currently 10 students on roll.
- The college admits students with complex behavioural, emotional and social difficulties from a number of local authorities. Most of the students are children looked after by a local authority and almost all have a statement of special educational needs. None of the students is disabled.
- The majority of students live in accommodation provided by the company. The company provides integrated therapeutic, educational and residential services to ensure a holistic approach to meeting students' individual needs.
- On admission to the college, students take part in an induction programme. During this period, their educational and personal needs are assessed as the provision gradually increases to full-time attendance. The college provides part-time placements for some students at Stoke-on-Trent College for individual vocational courses. Additional vocational courses are available at the Pathway College site.
- The sixth form provides full-time education for students aged 16 to 19 years, usually in conjunction with part-time placements at Stoke-on Trent College. A small number of students transfer to the college from the company's Young Options College at Shifnal in Shropshire to complete their post-16 education.
- The school was last inspected in June 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop ways to improve the attendance and engagement in full-time education of the small number of persistent absentees.
- Further develop systems for recording existing information about students' attainment in English and mathematics in order to ensure that:
 - students' attainment throughout the year may be readily compared with the standard expected for their age
 - the rate of students' progress over time compared with national expectations can be easily tracked.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The leadership and management of the college are outstanding as a result of high aspirations and expectations communicated by the headteacher and shared by all staff members. Senior leaders demonstrate a continuous commitment to self-evaluation and improvement.
- The staff work very effectively together. They all have an excellent awareness of the behavioural and learning characteristics of each student. All activities and plans are based on daily conversations between all staff members, and informed by excellent continuous dialogue with students' parents and carers. In this small school all members of staff have responsibility for the leadership of subjects and the tutoring of individual students. Effective teamwork results in high standards in all areas of their responsibilities.
- All staff and students work together to contribute to continuous review of the college's work. Decisions taken by the headteacher and by governors are informed well by careful checking on the successes and challenges experienced on a daily basis. As a result, plans for improvement focus appropriately on the most significant areas for development.
- The college's improvement partner makes a strong contribution to the evaluation of classroom practice through observation of teaching and analysis of students' progress. These activities complement and reinforce the accurate judgements made by the headteacher through regular checking on the quality of all aspects of the college's work.
- Senior leaders have ensured that the subjects and learning opportunities on offer are appropriate to the needs of each individual student. The headteacher is very flexible in responding to students' individual interests, while also ensuring that appropriate attention is given to essential subjects. An excellent balance between academic and vocational learning has been achieved. The leadership of teaching is excellent. As a result of outstanding teaching and learning, together with personalised careers education, students are prepared very well to move on to the next stage of their lives on leaving the college.
- Arrangements for monitoring the behaviour and attendance of students are excellent. Senior staff have implemented a range of suitable approaches to manage and improve any weaknesses, particularly in attendance.
- Students are extremely well prepared for life in modern Britain. Senior staff are very aware of the anti-social previous behaviour of many students and of the challenges facing them beyond the confines of the college. The college actively promotes equality of opportunity, fosters good relations and tackles discrimination. Attention to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and excellent arrangements are in place to evaluate the impact of this provision.
- The quality of the college's work and the extent of improvement since the last inspection indicate that the college's senior leaders have the capacity for continued improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - provides excellent and very effective support and challenge for the headteacher and the staff. Governors are well informed about the academic progress and personal development of each student. takes full account of regular reports from the headteacher to the company's head of service who also chairs the governors' meetings. Reports include analysis of data related to students' progress, including the results of external examinations.
 - is well informed by reports from the college's improvement partner, who also feeds her evaluation into the meetings of governors, providing an independent and accurate view particularly of classroom practice and outcomes.
 - includes the head of service, who is responsible for the management of the performance of the headteacher and is also well informed about the performance of each member of staff. The college has clear procedures in place to address any weakness in how staff work day-to-day.
 - provides strong support for the college with central administrative and human resources functions, including the appointment of staff. Governors ensure that appropriate procedures are implemented for all aspects of safeguarding and welfare.
 - has ensured that all the regulations for independent schools are met, including those related to the welfare and safeguarding of students.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**are outstanding****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is outstanding and contributes very strongly to their progress and achievement.
- The majority of students enter the college with very negative previous experiences of education. A number have been involved in anti-social or offending activity in their local communities. The majority enter the school as a result of re-location to residential accommodation provided by the company.
- The great majority of students settle well into the expectations of the college following a brief induction period. Their attitudes to learning and their willingness to engage in education demonstrate outstanding improvement compared with their response to previous settings. They are interested in their work and are motivated to succeed.
- The college has excellent systems for evaluating and recording changes in students' emotional and social behaviour. There is a strong, effective therapeutic element in the provision for students, managed in cooperation with their residences. College records show a marked reduction in behavioural incidents once students have settled into the school.
- Students' behaviour in lessons is consistently outstanding. Students show respect for their teachers and are confident to engage in conversation, deepening their understanding by asking questions and responding positively to learning tasks. Students consistently demonstrate respect for the staff and take their work seriously. As a result, they make consistently strong progress across a wide range of subjects.
- Written reports from students' college placements are positive and complimentary about their attitudes to learning, their engagement in practical activities and the progress they make in managing their attitudes and behaviour.
- The college makes outstanding provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The walls of classrooms and corridors are alive with displays and photographs of students' involvement in a range of activities in the local and wider communities. Students celebrate a 'Great Britain Day' annually; they study aspects of the civil and criminal law, together with the role of Parliament and the democratic system in Britain. They have enjoyed and learned effectively from visits to the local courts and cells, and from a re-enactment of a Victorian trial at Nottingham court.
- Visitors to the school, including the local police community support officer and the fire and ambulance services, enable students to understand the range of responsibilities managed by local community services. Students have excellent opportunities to engage in activities in the local community, for example: joining the library and a local gym; attending events at a variety of museums; organising a charitable coffee morning; improving the gardens at a local church; and running a market stall at an annual Christmas fair.
- The college analyses the individual social characteristics of each student and provides activities and events to increase their awareness of alcohol and drugs abuse, bullying and racism. In conversation, students demonstrate a sensitive and well-informed understanding of anti-social behaviour, including homophobic, cyber and racist bullying.
- Students have excellent opportunities to develop their understanding of the diversity of cultures and beliefs in Britain. The college operates a programme of regular 'collapsed timetable' days each with a specific cultural focus. Students have visited Sikh and Buddhist temples and a local mosque. These visits have resulted, for example, in a continuing positive relationship with a Sikh family.
- The college has excellent arrangements for evaluating the impact of all these social and cultural activities on students' personal development, including interviews with students and questionnaires to parents and carers.
- Overall attendance is below the national average. However, the attendance of the majority of students is good and demonstrates a rapid and marked improvement over time. A small number of students are persistently absent, often as a result of complex emotional issues which detract from their ability to engage positively in education for sustained periods of time. The college makes excellent arrangements to work with them, often in their residences to motivate and re-engage them successfully in full-time education.

Safety

- The college's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. High levels of staff supervision, including one-to-one and small group teaching, ensure that students are safe at all times. The premises

of the school are secure with controlled access at all times.

- The college liaises effectively with alternative provision attended by students.
- The college has excellent arrangements in place for the safe recruitment of staff and for ensuring effective safeguarding of students. All members of staff are trained to the required levels in child protection, and appropriate numbers of staff are similarly trained in safe recruitment, first aid and fire safety.
- Regular, routine checks on the premises, including all aspects of fire safety, are conducted and recorded appropriately. Comprehensive policies underpin the management of behaviour, the prevention of bullying and all aspects of health and safety. Excellent training and regular review ensure that policies and procedures are implemented consistently.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- The quality of teaching is outstanding and enables students to make outstanding progress with their learning. Excellent, trusting relationships with staff ensure that students settle quickly into the expectations of the college and develop confidence in their ability to achieve.
- The school's effectiveness in meeting the standards relating to the quality of education provided and personal development is excellent.
- Each student is provided with a personalised timetable carefully designed to help them to make up lost ground in their basic skills of literacy, reading and numeracy. All the required areas of learning are included and students have the opportunity to choose vocational courses which meet their individual interests and career aspirations.
- Almost all students have a statement of special educational needs and the college is careful to ensure that the provision meets the requirements of each individual statement. Individual education and behaviour plans are used effectively to create targets for achievement which are shared with students. These targets are very helpful during regular reviews of students' progress in each subject.
- Students are taught mostly in one-to-one or small group arrangements. The quality of teachers' questioning is outstanding and continuous dialogue characterises lessons across a wide range of subjects. As a result, students make rapid progress in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT).
- Teachers manage students' behaviour exceptionally well. There is no distracting behaviour and any lapse in concentration is immediately checked, often with good humour and positive encouragement. Staff are well trained to manage any occasional outburst which may result from an individual student's emotional condition.
- Teachers provide creative and interesting activities for students, often with a strong visual or practical element. Students responded positively, and showed good understanding, through the use of video clips in science and personal, social and health education lessons. Students were relaxed and willing to contribute their ideas and questions to the related discussions.
- Students enjoy practical lessons, for example in art, physical education and food technology, where they are taught techniques and skills which they can apply to future situations. Teachers ensure that there is an appropriate balance between communicating new skills and allowing students time and independence to practise and consolidate their learning.
- Students' work is assessed and their achievements are recorded accurately and regularly. Teachers have a good understanding of how their students are progressing through the content of courses.
- The current central system for recording students' achievement in individual subjects does not identify sufficiently small steps in progress within a level 1 or 2 course. As a result, it is not easy for senior leaders to evaluate the extent of progress each half-term and how standards compare with national expectations.
- Excellent provision is made for students' transition to further education or employment. Careers advice and preparation for each new stage of education are available through local services and those based in individual students' placing authorities. The headteacher ensures that there is a high level of appropriate communication between all those involved with students' future education or training.

The achievement of pupils**is outstanding**

- Students enter the college with standards of attainment which are mostly well below those expected for their age. This results from prolonged periods of absence or exclusion from a number of previous schools due to inappropriate behaviour, or irregular engagement in education as a result of complex emotional and social difficulties.
- The school meets the standards relating to the subjects and learning activities and also assessment very effectively.
- As a result of a renewed willingness to take part in education, the great majority of these disadvantaged students including those with special educational needs make outstanding progress during their time at the college. Most make rapid progress over a relatively short period of time and begin to fill the gaps in their previous learning. They start to catch up with the standards achieved nationally by students of a similar age.
- The college provides outstanding subject flexibility with provision tailor-made to meet the needs and aspirations of each individual student. All required areas of learning are available within the experiences and activities on offer, which enables students to make outstanding progress across a wide range of subjects.
- Students make excellent progress with their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. They begin to read for pleasure and are happy to talk about the books they are reading at home. One student talked about the tests she sets herself and how her knowledge is tested at home on the content and meaning of her English set texts.
- Students make similar, immediate gains in the acquisition and application of their numeracy skills, applying these, for example, in weighing and measuring ingredients in food studies lessons.
- Teachers ensure that all students have immediate access to appropriate courses of study in English, mathematics, ICT and science. Students begin to achieve success with externally accredited courses in these subjects, including entry level certificates or foundation level functional skills awards.
- The rapid rate of students' progress in these areas of learning ensures that even those students who remain at the school for less than one year leave with substantial accredited learning which may be taken on to their next placement. Those students who remain at the school for more than one year make substantial and sustained progress to achieve foundation and higher level certificates in functional skills or GCSE.
- Relatively more-able students make excellent progress towards GCSE awards. Those who have remained in the school for sufficient time to the end of Key Stage 4 have achieved grade B and C results, for example in English, mathematics, art and physical education. Students have not been entered early for GCSE examinations.
- Students' achievements extend beyond key subjects and include successful completion of accredited courses at foundation and higher levels, for example in art, sports studies, hair and beauty, and food technology.
- Written reports from Stoke-on-Trent College indicate that Key Stage 4 students attending vocational courses make excellent efforts and achieve better than expected outcomes given their low starting points.
- As a result of greatly improved relationships with other students and with adults, students undertake successful part-time work placements, for example at a wildlife sanctuary, in retail and in hospitality. Others successfully complete part-time college placements, for example in construction and motor vehicle studies.
- As a result of the outstanding progress made during Key Stages 3 and 4, students are well prepared to move on to courses of further education at local colleges. At the end of the last academic year, students progressed, for example, to college courses in health and social care, sports and fitness, and creative arts. Others have moved into the college sixth form in order to complete their preparation for further education or employment.

The sixth form provision**is outstanding**

- The college provides education for a small number of post-16 students. A small number of students remain at the college after the age of 16. Others, due to changes of residence, enter the college at the age of 16 or 17. These post-16 students are provided with the opportunity to continue their preparation

for further education or employment.

- Typically, the post-16 students have not fulfilled their academic potential due to anti-social behaviour in previous schools and within the community. The college provides them with a fresh start in a new environment. The provision includes a strong emphasis on their emotional and social development.
- The quality of leadership and management of the post-16 provision is outstanding. Students are enabled to achieve emotional stability and to develop very good social behaviours which enable them to address many of the issues which have previously held them back.
- Senior leaders ensure that each post-16 student has an opportunity to form strong relationships with members of staff. Students are given regular opportunities to review their academic and personal progress. Strong relationships are built between the college and students' residences. As a result, individual students have achieved 'Best Newcomer Award' and 'Headteacher's Award'.
- Students who are not ready for full-time placements in further education at the end of Key Stage 4 are each provided with an individual course of work. The courses provided are aimed at preparing them for qualifications, particularly in English and mathematics, in order to continue their studies in further education. The quality of teaching for these students is outstanding and enables them to make accelerated progress towards externally accredited qualifications. Students generally achieve outstandingly over their time in the college.
- Post-16 students are taught individually or, where appropriate, alongside students in Key Stage 4. In addition, they are provided with individual access to part-time work-related learning and college placements. Levels of staff supervision and support are high and successful, including one-to-one support during the early stages of college placements.
- As in other parts of the college, the arrangements for safety and safeguarding are outstanding.
- Those students who leave the college at the end of Year 12 or 13 move on to successful further education vocational courses; a small number return to live in their home local authority and engage successfully in semi-independent living.
- The sixth form is very effective in meeting the requirements of the independent school standards.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	136220
Inspection number	446255
DfE registration number	861/6004

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.

Type of school	Day special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11–19 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	10
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	2
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Options Group Ltd
Chair	Graham Baker
Headteacher	Mel Callaghan
Date of previous school inspection	22 June 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£65,000
Telephone number	01782 320773
Fax number	01782 331585
Email address	mel.callaghan@youngoptions.co.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

