

TLC The Learning Centre

59 Queensway, Petts Wood, Orpington, Kent, BR5 1EB

Inspection dates 21–22 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This is a good school.

- As a result of good leadership and management, the school has improved significantly since the last inspection and most students achieve well. All the Independent School's Standards are met.
- Teaching is good. Suitably challenging work enables most students to make rapid progress once they have settled. The teaching staff generally have high expectations of what students can achieve and know their students well.
- The curriculum is broad and relevant to the needs of all students. It enables them to achieve well in many subjects. It prepares students well for further education, training or employment.
- Good pastoral care helps students to make significant progress in their personal development. They re-engage quickly with their learning.
- Attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning have improved greatly. Students respond very well to the caring and friendly atmosphere provided by all staff. They feel safe and secure, and behave well.
- The Principal, who is also the proprietor, communicates a clear vision of high expectations to all staff and students. She knows the school well and actively contributes to improving it.
- The curriculum leader has a secure understanding of how to further improve the quality of education.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Teaching is not always focused on helping all students to make rapid progress. As a result, a small minority of more able students do not progress as rapidly as they should.
- Systems to check and improve the quality of teaching are not sufficiently rigorous to raise students' achievement to outstanding. Teaching staff do not have access to a sufficiently wide range of high-quality training.
- The school does not have sufficient links with the local community to provide students with a broad range of work placement opportunities. Students have few first-hand experiences of diversity and democracy in the wider community.
- The proprietor has not ensured systems are effective enough to help her check all aspects of the school's work rigorously. Consequently, she has not been critical enough of measures taken to further improve the quality of teaching.

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 at one day's notice.
- The inspector observed seven part lessons taught by five teachers, three of whom were appointed recently. Students were heard reading.
- Discussions were held with the Principal, who is also the proprietor, staff and students.
- Questionnaire responses were considered from four members of staff. No information was available from the online questionnaire, Parent View. However, the inspector took into account the results of a survey of parental views carried out by the school in the preceding academic year and spoke to one carer. The inspector also took into account the results of a survey of students' views carried out by the school in the preceding academic year. The views of two officers of the placing authority were obtained through telephone conversations.
- A wide range of documents was examined, including school policies and procedures, and behaviour and attendance records. Information on the performance of current students and students who have left the school was analysed. Individual student files, samples of work, and reports on their welfare and academic progress were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Michèle Messaoudi, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- TLC, The Learning Centre, is an independent day school that opened in September 2010 to provide full-time education for girls who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). It was registered in July 2010 for up to 12 girls aged between 11 and 16 years. It is located in Petts Wood, in the London Borough of Bromley. The school uses local facilities for physical education and recreation.
- There are currently four girls on roll aged between 14 and 16 years, three of whom joined the school in September or October 2014. They all have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion from mainstream schools and/or special provision. They are placed and funded by Bromley local authority. Two students have a statement of special educational needs. One student is in the care of the placing authority. All students are of White British heritage.
- The school had its first inspection by Ofsted in July 2011, when it was judged to provide an inadequate quality of education. A significantly large number of regulations, including those in relation to the provision of education, welfare, health and safety, safeguarding and the recruitment of staff, were not met. The school submitted an action plan showing how it would meet these standards and the plan was accepted. An inspection was carried out in December 2011 to evaluate the extent to which the school had implemented its action plan and remedied its deficiencies. The school was found to meet all but two of the regulations for independent schools.
- The Principal is also the proprietor of the school. A curriculum leader was appointed in September 2011 to take responsibility for the quality of teaching, the curriculum and students' achievement. The current curriculum leader was appointed in April 2014. There are four full-time teachers and others teach part time. Three of the teachers were recruited between July and October 2014. The school also employs two full-time teaching assistants.
- The school's aim is to 'offer a nurturing environment tailored to the individual student's needs and provide mainstream and alternative education with a difference'.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and so help all students to make rapid progress by ensuring that:
 - activities and resources provide sufficient challenge for all students, including the most able
 - teaching assistants are always clear about their role, both in terms of pastoral and academic support
 - checks on the quality of teaching are consistently focused on helping each student to make good or outstanding progress
 - all staff have access to a wide range of high-quality training to develop their skills.
- Improve the leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that training and targets set for staff are linked to the school's improvement priorities
 - strengthening partnerships with local schools to share good practice, training and develop systems for checking students' learning
 - widening links with the local community to provide students with a broad range of work placement opportunities and enrich their experiences of diversity and democracy
 - ensuring that systems for checking all aspects of the school's work are rigorous.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The school has improved significantly since the last inspection. Students now achieve well owing to good teaching, a broad curriculum and good pastoral care.
- The Principal, curriculum leader, teachers and teaching assistants work as a cohesive team to provide a positive learning atmosphere where students can flourish. As a result, students make good progress in overcoming their barriers to learning, and in developing good social skills and positive behaviour.
- Safeguarding arrangements are robust. The school follows up on any concern or serious incident rigorously in close partnerships with the placing authority, parents, carers and outside agencies.
- The curriculum is broad, relevant to students' needs and planned effectively. It places a strong emphasis on developing students' reading, writing and mathematical skills. Information and communication technology has a high profile. It provides both academic and work-related pathways in all the required areas of learning. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is planned effectively to prepare them well for life in modern Britain.
- Students' progress and achievements are reported to parents, carers and the placing authority in a detailed and clear way. The information they contain helps parents and carers to understand how well their daughters are doing, and what they need to do to improve.
- A well-structured careers guidance programme helps students to recognise their talents, strengths and weaknesses and to explore their interests. Students have access to up-to-date information about work, further education and training. Visits from professionals such as public health officers help to raise their aspirations. However, opportunities for work placements are limited.
- The leadership of teaching is strong. The curriculum leader has established and strengthened systems for tracking students' academic progress, behaviour and attendance rigorously.
- Staff benefit from a culture in which they can share their experience and skills. They frequently reflect on the most effective strategies to employ to teach different students. They help to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- Regular checks on teaching focus on helping each student to make good or outstanding progress, but not consistently so. Occasionally, lesson observations do not sharply focus on how much progress those with the highest starting points make. As a result, these students do not always make the progress they should.
- The school evaluates its performance accurately and secures further improvements through rigorous management plans. However, targets set for teaching staff are not linked closely enough to the priorities for improvement and high-quality training. This lack of rigour is preventing the quality of teaching and students' achievement from rising to outstanding.
- The school works very effectively with the placing authority, parents, carers and outside agencies for the benefit of all students. The placing authority, parents and carers are highly satisfied with the school's ability to secure good outcomes for very challenging students.
- The school's links with the local community are developing. They are not yet strong enough to provide students with a broad range of work placement opportunities and of experiences of diversity and democracy. The school has plans to strengthen links with local schools for the purpose of supporting the training and development of staff. These plans include developing new systems for checking students' learning without levels.
- **The governance of the school:**

The proprietor knows the school well and has a well-informed view of the quality of teaching. She has a good understanding of the school's performance information and how it compares with that for similar schools. However, systems are not sufficiently robust to check all aspects of the school's work. In particular, the proprietor has not been sufficiently critical of the way targets were set and training was planned to further develop teaching.

The proprietor ensures that resources are managed effectively to overcome barriers to learning, including in reading, writing and numeracy. Financial resources are used well for the benefit of all students. The proprietor has ensured that all the standards for independent schools are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good both in and out of classrooms. Students join the school with a history

of extremely challenging behaviour and disrupted education. Some have been out of education for up to 18 months. School records show that students' behaviour improves significantly over time and that the rate of fixed-term exclusions reduces considerably. Students respond quickly to guidance from staff to help them manage their own behaviour, so that occasional outbursts are dealt with very effectively. Low-level disruption is rare and learning occurs in a calm atmosphere. Students show respect for others and for school property. They willingly tidy up after practical tasks.

- The attendance and punctuality of most students are good and improve greatly after joining the school. Students who previously refused to come to school now have high levels of attendance and good punctuality. Students say they enjoy the welcoming and friendly atmosphere created by the staff.
- Students re-engage quickly in education and demonstrate good attitudes to learning. Their books and folders show that they take pride in their work and most present it neatly. Most participate well in classroom activities. Those who are experiencing powerful emotions know when to take time out of class. Whether they decide to reintegrate the class after a short while or to stay in isolation, they generally complete their work. All students have access to weekly counselling to support their emotional development.
- Students gradually develop good social skills with staff support. Through the behaviour management strategies implemented by the school, they show an increasing awareness of others' needs and feelings. They look out for each other. They are generally courteous.
- Students learn how public institutions work together for the good of all in modern democratic Britain through citizenship education and educational visits. They actively practise democracy through the 'student voice' activities which promote their leadership and enterprise skills and their sense of responsibility. Students learn about the diversity of cultures and religious beliefs that exist in Britain through humanities and citizenship. However, they have too few first-hand experiences of meeting people in the wider community who have different cultures and beliefs from theirs. Also, their understanding of how democracy works is not supported by a wide enough range of educational visits and extra-curricular activities.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Robust safeguarding arrangements ensure that staff and visitors are properly vetted. All staff are appropriately trained to keep students safe. Risks posed to students and staff, on and off site, are thoroughly checked. Accidents hardly ever occur and are minor.
- Students feel safe and well cared for. They enjoy very positive relationships with staff and peers. They say there is always a member of staff they can turn to if they have a concern or need support. They feel free from any harassment and school records show that bullying is very rare.
- Students are aware of all forms of bullying and discrimination. The school challenges the use of homophobic language and homophobic and racist views effectively. As a result, students gain a good understanding of equalities and human rights. Visitors from the African Caribbean community have helped students to explore and challenge stereotypes.
- Safety education is planned effectively and supported by training for staff and students, for example on e-safety, and by educational visits.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is mostly good and enables most students to make good or better progress, including those who have specific learning difficulties.
- Clear identification of students' starting points, abilities and needs helps teachers to provide courses pitched at the correct level for each student and plan suitably challenging work. There is a shared expectation among staff that all students can make good or better progress and a common understanding that students must experience success before increasing the level of challenge.
- The curriculum is tailored to individual students' needs. Students are usually taught in one-to-one sessions and small groups, which develops their concentration and social skills. Teachers record students' progress in each subject. Weekly review of students' individual educational plans supports their learning well.
- The staff meet at regular intervals to discuss each student's progress and make decisions about where curriculum modifications are needed. Teachers assess students' learning every half-term and track their progress rigorously, including in reading and spelling.
- Students gain a good understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve

their work through verbal and written feedback, and the setting of learning targets. Marking is always encouraging.

- The teaching staff are good role models who promote good standards of behaviour and courtesy, and establish positive working relationships. Generally, all staff work effectively together to encourage students to persevere with the tasks given in class. They carefully defuse situations that might cause students to go off task.
- Teaching assistants are not always sufficiently clear about their role in terms of academic and pastoral support. They routinely take initiatives that help a student with challenging behaviour to remain focused on learning. However, on occasion, these initiatives are not as successful as they could otherwise be with clearer guidance.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They are skilful at engaging students in learning through lively questioning and interesting tasks that quickly build up students' knowledge and confidence. They frequently check on students' learning and help them to consolidate their understanding of concepts and develop their ideas. When revising topics, teachers provide good academic guidance that helps students to prepare well for their examinations. Occasionally, the pace of learning drops when students are allowed to become less focused.
- The most able students are not always sufficiently challenged by the activities set. As a result, these students do not make the rapid progress of which they are capable.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students' achievement is good. Students join the school with starting points that are typically low for their age owing to severely disrupted education. As a result of good teaching and pastoral care, most students, including those who have specific learning needs, make good and sometimes outstanding progress. There are no significant differences in the achievement of students with the highest and lowest starting points.
- The broad curriculum enables students to achieve well in many subject areas including English and mathematics. The setting of learning targets helps students to progress systematically through the curriculum in each subject area. Students who complete their education at the school achieve a broad range of qualifications that prepare them well for further education, employment or training.
- All students gain Entry Level 1, 2 or 3 Functional Skills qualifications. Many students gain Higher Level 1 and 2 Functional Skills in English and mathematics.
- The most able students achieve well with many gaining GCSEs in English and mathematics. However, a small minority do not make the rapid progress of which they are capable. This is because teachers do not always set work at the right level to enable them to make rapid progress.
- Students are helped to catch up with their reading and spelling skills rapidly through an effective reading programme. In English, there is a strong focus on developing students' comprehension skills and vocabulary when studying literature. Discussions are used to good effect to promote students' speaking and reasoning skills, for example. In other subjects, students have daily opportunities for reading and defining new words.
- Students are encouraged to write at length in English and their work shows that their writing skills are developing well. However, in some other subjects, there are few opportunities for them to write at length.
- Progress in students' personal development is significant, as noted by the placing authority, parents and carers. Students themselves acknowledge how much progress they have made in their behaviour and social skills. A student who left the school recently said, 'The teachers are brilliant. They have helped me to listen more and calm down.' The school has begun to track the progress students make in their personal development.

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	136228
Inspection number	447201
DfE registration number	305/6081

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	4
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Geraldine Kane
Principal	Geraldine Kane
Date of previous school inspection	7 December 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£14,000 to £29,000
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