

Young Options College

Lamledge Lane, Shifnal, TF11 8SD

Inspection dates

30 June – 2 July 2015

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
Sixth form provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This is a good school.

- School leaders and the proprietors have established a climate for learning in which the majority of pupils turnaround their previous poor behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Leaders check on progress and teaching rigorously and ensure staff are held closely to account for pupils' progress.
- Pupils' progress is good because most work takes good account of pupils' previous learning.
- Pupils' behaviour is typically good because it is well managed by staff who understand pupils' difficulties.
- The proprietor and senior staff ensure that pupils are kept safe. Safety checks are meticulously carried out.
- Teachers use questions well to probe pupils' learning. Most adapt their lessons effectively when misunderstandings are apparent.
- Pupils' skills in reading and mathematics improve particularly well due to strong teaching in these subjects.
- Well-targeted additional support enables disadvantaged pupils to make similar progress to their classmates.
- Improvements to the curriculum enthuse pupils and particularly those with the most complex needs. An increasing range of qualifications and courses provides improved opportunities for everyone to succeed.
- Pupils have good opportunities to debate and explore British values and are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good.
- The sixth form is good because sixth form courses are carefully tailored to students' interests, achievements and needs. Strong relationships with local colleges, schools and other providers enhance the school's own provision well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teachers expect enough of the most able pupils. Sometimes they are not moved on quickly enough to more difficult work.
- Progress and attainment in science and writing are not quite as good as in other subjects. Work does not consistently challenge or motivate pupils sufficiently. Some pupils rarely write at length.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at one day's notice.
- The inspector observed learning in lessons in all parts of the school jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Pupils' work was examined during lessons. More detailed scrutiny of work in a range of subjects was also undertaken to consider pupils' progress since entry.
- Meetings took place with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the senior leadership team and a representative of the school's proprietorial and management board.
- The inspector also talked with pupils informally during lessons and at other times. She met with a group of pupils to explore their views about the school, including about behaviour and how well the school keeps them safe.
- The inspector examined a range of school documentation including policies and records as to how the school keeps pupils safe, the school's self evaluation and its improvement planning and the information that it collects about pupils' attendance, progress and teaching.
- The inspector checked that all the required information for parents, carers and others, including a compliant safeguarding policy, was available on the school's website.
- The inspector analysed a Department for Education census and 'point in time' surveys, as well as 24 questionnaires from staff. There were too few responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, for these to be considered. The inspector read testimonies from parents that had been previously submitted to the school, either via the website or in pupils' records.

Inspection team

Susan Lewis, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Young Options College is a small independent purpose-built day school that provides education for up to 50 pupils who may have complex and severe social, emotional and mental health needs, often involving challenging behaviour.
- It is owned by the Options group who also own other schools in England and Wales.
- Almost all pupils have a statement of special educational needs relating to such needs. An increasing proportion has additional learning needs such as autistic spectrum disorders, attention deficit disorders or moderate learning difficulties.
- Pupils come from a large number of local authorities across England and Wales and occasionally further afield. Most pupils are White British.
- The large majority of pupils are in Key Stages 3 and 4. Six attend the school's sixth form and a further eight its Key Stage 2 provision. There are many more boys than girls on roll.
- Pupils join the school at any point in their primary or secondary school career, some as late as Year 11. Many have been excluded from schools previously or spent long periods of time not attending schools.
- The school makes use of alternative provision including at Nova Training, Walford College and Telford College of Arts and Technology, as well as using local businesses or farms for work experience.
- The school receives the pupil premium funding for a small number of pupils (this is funding specifically for pupils eligible for free school meals and those looked after by their local authority). Although a higher proportion than usual are eligible for this, this funding is not always passed on by the placing authorities.
- The last full inspection of the school was in June 2014 when the school was judged to be good and all the independent standards were met. An emergency inspection visit in February 2014 also found all standards to be met.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the achievement of pupils and the quality of teaching to outstanding, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - have consistently high expectations of pupils' behaviour and academic work, and particularly the most able
 - adapt work to take account of pupils' responses in lessons, so that pupils are challenged to achieve even more.
- Improve achievement in science and in writing by ensuring that:
 - pupils understand in science what they are to learn and why, and their engagement is sustained
 - writing tasks in all subjects motivate pupils to write, including at length, and help them to practise their writing skills
 - pupils have the opportunity to write in different ways
 - more varied ways of promoting writing are used, appropriate to the needs of the pupils, such as laptop and other technologies, so that they practise their writing skills in more varied ways, including writing at length
 - improvements in pupils' spelling and grammar in pupils' writing are consistently supported by all staff, in line with the whole school policy.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leadership team have developed their work well since the previous inspection. New ways of checking on teaching and learning and new approaches to the subject teaching, particularly in Key Stages 2 and 3, are valued by staff and pupils. The school has continued to improve because new staff have quickly settled and the school has coped well with increased numbers of pupils with more complex needs. This is because the proprietors and the leadership have continued to prioritise staff training and to provide high levels of support for individual pupils.
- Rigorous checking on the school's work, including effective ways of gathering information about pupils' progress, mean that the quality of education, including teaching, achievement and behaviour are good and that all of the independent school's regulatory standards are met.
- A new and more co-ordinated approach to providing for pupils' special educational needs is paying off, so that pupils' additional learning needs such as their reading difficulties, specific mathematical needs or their needs related to their autistic spectrum disorders, are understood very well by staff. This is because the school's clinical team and special educational needs coordinator work very well together and provide high quality pupil centred information to all teachers. Consequently staff are clear as to the strategies that will help these pupils to learn well.
- The curriculum is good. Subject leaders and the senior leadership team ensure that it sustains the interest and engagement of pupils at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 through effective planning. Consequently, this is transforming some previously disaffected pupils' attitudes to learning so that they now stay in lessons and attend more regularly.
- A good range of vocational and academic subjects are taught that cover all the expected areas of learning, including the requirements of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs. The school has strengthened its links with local colleges and schools recently. This means more varied courses and sporting opportunities are available to pupils, including the opportunity to learn in more mainstream settings. The school uses early entry to GCSE to build pupils' resilience in taking examinations and their confidence in their own ability. Almost all go on to try for higher grades subsequently.
- Leaders, including those leading the sixth form identify the courses and qualifications that will motivate each pupil and enable them to leave with the best opportunities for their next steps. Pupils respond well to the high-quality vocational courses and work experience provided at the school, at local colleges and in local businesses and farms. Leaders carefully monitor the pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour in the alternative provision the school uses. They respond rapidly to any sign that any aspect is falling behind.
- Good careers guidance is provided, often in conjunction with the placing authorities so that many pupils become more ambitious. Pupils say that because they know that they can achieve qualifications they start to believe that they will have a more productive future.
- Good procedures to check staff performance ensure that teachers are clear about what needs to improve in their teaching and feel supported in achieving this. Regular pupil progress meetings and checks on pupils' work mean that leaders know the strengths and areas for improvement of teaching and achievement very well. This all ensures that pupils' progress from their varied starting points is good and that almost all make up lost ground and begin to catch up on others of their age.
- The pupil premium funding is used well to provide additional support and experiences for pupils in specific subjects or for their behaviour. Leaders check carefully that this is having the desired impact on pupils' achievement and well-being.
- The school's self evaluation is accurate and leads to effective development planning, showing astute understanding of the needs of the school. For example, new purchases, such as more computers and

interactive whiteboards to support teaching and learning have already been approved, because leaders recognise the need to find more motivating ways of engaging and challenging pupils, including when writing.

- The school has reviewed planning to ensure it actively promotes pupils' understanding of British traditions and values. New staff lead well on this and there are careful checks on opportunities provided in all subjects in this regard. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop understanding of the meaning of individual liberty, democracy, the rule of law and respect and tolerance for others.
- Cultural understanding comes through a range of art, sporting and cultural projects as well as the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Good examples of pupils being reminded of the importance of respect for others' views were seen. Work around the school and discussions with pupils demonstrated the increasing sensitivity with which pupils are able to reflect on others' life styles, faiths and needs. Work in humanities and in personal development lessons also ensures pupils are set up well for their next steps and for life in modern Britain.
- All safeguarding requirements are met. Staff receive child protection training at the required intervals. All staff are properly vetted before employment.
- The school fulfils its duties under schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The school promotes equality and diversity well. Careful attention to individuals' learning needs, as well as high staffing levels, robust risk assessment procedures and good staff training mean that pupils have good access to the therapy, resources, support and advice they need.

■ The governance of the school:

Governance is good. The proprietors, including the school's management committee, keep careful watch on the school's standards. They ensure that school leaders and teachers are challenged regularly as to how progress and behaviour are improving for individuals and groups. They know the school very well and are committed to providing the resources that staff need to improve teaching and learning further. They ensure only good teaching is rewarded.

The proprietors have ensured that all regulations are met. They make all the required information available to parents and carers, including up-to-date and compliant safeguarding policies and procedures. They have ensured that all safeguarding responsibilities are met, including those for staff training and checks on their suitability.

The proprietors check that all the required welfare, health and safety checks are carried out meticulously, including the fire safety checks. There are good plans in place to develop the premises and resources further so that the environment is even more attractive to pupils.

The proprietors have an ambitious vision for the school and its pupils. They are determined that pupils will be as well prepared for their next steps as possible. This determination is reflected in the ways in which they check on and support the school's work, for example constantly seeking ways in which links between the pupils' homes and the school can be strengthened.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Almost all pupils improve their attendance and behaviour considerably whilst they are at the school. Although incidents do occur, most staff are very skilled at ensuring that other pupils' learning is not disrupted. Pupils become increasingly tolerant of others' outbursts and carry on with their own learning.
- High levels of supervision, coupled with good levels of staff training, mean that pupils learn increasingly well in groups. They have ready access to individual support, either in the 'reflection room' or in smaller rooms, should they be in difficulties.
- Many pupils do have extremely challenging behaviour on entering the school, particularly if the work is not well matched to their interests and needs. School records show a reduction in incidents and fixed term exclusions for individual pupils as they start to reengage in education. Most make a considerable

improvement in their attendance because staff quickly build supportive relationships with pupils and pupils find the learning more meaningful. Pupils who have been in the school for longer have particularly good attitudes to learning and their work reflects their pride in their achievements.

- Pupils are proud of the progress they make in managing their own behaviour and are highly reflective on their own needs. They praise staff and other pupils for their tolerance and display a good understanding of the factors that might influence others' behaviour. They are clear about 'the rules' but are also aware that occasionally staff do not apply them. They feel that this does not always help everyone to make best progress.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. All the required checks on the suitability of staff are carried out and staff are ever vigilant. If pupils attempt to abscond, for example, procedures are followed scrupulously. Incidents that involve physical intervention are recorded carefully and analysed to check on the appropriateness of the intervention and what can be learned. Procedures for inducting new pupils into school are carefully considered so that other learners are disrupted as little as possible and feel safe.
- Pupils say that bullying at this school is much rarer than they have experienced elsewhere. They have a good understanding of the different forms that bullying might take and a strong awareness of the dangers of social media sites and the ways in which they can keep themselves safe. Staff too believe that pupils are safe because of the systems in place, even though there are times when pupils do hit out at others or try to abscond.
- Too few parents and carers responded to the Parent View questionnaire for their views to be ascertained, however, pupil files and the school's own records show any parental concerns are quickly responded to. Procedures and links with parents and the pupils' homes have been strengthened since the last inspection. Records show incidents where pupils put themselves at risk decline rapidly for most individual pupils as they settle into the school.
- Pupils' emotional well-being and understanding of how to keep themselves safe are actively promoted through a range of therapies and subjects. Pupils say that there is always someone who will listen and that that is what they particularly value about the school.
- A very strong taught programme helps pupils to recognise for themselves where they might be at risk, including how they might recognise extremist views. Pupils demonstrate respect and tolerance for different ways of living. They are clear about what constitutes racist language and discrimination. School records show such language is occasionally used but is always quickly and decisively dealt with. Pupils themselves are quick to say why it is unacceptable.
- Pupils take part in a range of off-site activities, including Duke of Edinburgh Awards as well as forest schools and vocational activities on-site. There are detailed and robust risk assessments and procedures around these activities, including when pupils are at alternative provision and college. Their attendance and behaviour at these and at school is checked on rigorously so that the school is clear about why pupils are not in school and what is happening to them. The school's home tuition team provides direct support to pupils who continue to find attending school difficult.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good because teachers are skilled at managing the behaviour and planning for the learning of the pupils that they teach. Most teachers plan interesting work for pupils that is well placed to help them to achieve their targets. This is particularly so in Key Stage 2 and in subjects such as mathematics, where teachers and instructors are very clear about pupils' next steps and what they must now learn to do to achieve them.
- Most teachers make good use of the accurate information leaders provide, about pupils' skills and abilities on entry, so that the work provided is well matched to pupils' needs.

- Occasionally more able pupils waste time doing work that is too easy. Sometimes they finish quickly but are still not given more challenging work to do. Although in individual sessions these pupils often have well targeted support that does enable them to make good progress, their progress over time is not better than good because of this.
- The teaching of reading is good because pupils who need it receive well targeted support. Pupils' reading levels and skills are monitored carefully and teachers in all subjects promote pupils' reading skills well. Pupils have many practical opportunities to apply their skills, whether in checking on a car's roadworthiness certificate or researching about specific animals or historical events.
- The teaching of mathematics is good. Teachers generally have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and progress and are experts in their subject and how to inspire reluctant learners to learn. Pupils throughout the school, including sixth-form students, make good and sometimes better progress in mathematics as a result. They also say how much they love mathematics now. Good opportunities to apply their newfound confidence are provided through other subjects.
- Some aspects of the teaching of writing are not leading to consistently good improvements in pupils' work. Many pupils, particularly boys, are reluctant writers and, occasionally, tasks do not build their confidence and interest sufficiently. Some pupils rarely write at length; although they are keen to express their ideas and instructors often scribe these. The school is rightly considering how it might use different approaches to writing, such as using technology appropriate to pupils' needs. It has chosen a more thematic approach to the curriculum, which is already beginning to inspire pupils to write further.
- Teachers are skilled at providing explanations and most use probing questions to check on pupils' understanding and to make links to previous learning. However, when this reveals misunderstandings, not all teachers adapt their plans to go over these. This limits learning, for example in science, because previous learning is not secure enough.
- Teachers use praise and the school's new rewards and marking policy to help pupils to improve their work. Pupils value and understand this. For some newer pupils, this is proving a keen motivator where other systems have previously failed. However, checking that pupils' spelling and grammar is correct and making suggestions for improvements are not consistently good across all teaching.
- Instructors and teachers generally work well together so that pupils stay on task for increasingly longer periods and that each is clear about what pupils are learning and their roles in this. Pupils themselves feel that they make much better progress than in previous schools because there is always someone who can help them to understand.
- Teaching is at least good in all other subjects, including the vocational courses that pupils take. Teachers in these subjects support pupils' personal targets, their attitudes to learning and their functional skills well. Teaching supports good progress in art, music and physical education, because teachers have good subject knowledge and are very clear as to what pupils need to do to improve and how they can achieve this and share this well with pupils.
- The courses and programmes that all pupils take, including sixth form pupils, are carefully selected to fulfil requirements, to help them prepare for next steps, to build on their talents and to meet their needs. This all helps them to make up ground lost before entering the school and to think carefully about their next steps. Strong relationships with teachers and instructors are a key factor in pupils' improving behaviour and attitudes to learning, because of the mutual trust and respect that is developed. Pupils say they know their teachers believe in them and will 'always give them a chance' and so they start to believe in themselves too.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Achievement is good because the large majority of pupils make good progress from their starting points on entering the school and particularly in reading, in mathematics and in the vocational subjects that they

study. They make considerable strides in their learning attitudes and in their ambitions for themselves, so that they are much better equipped for their next steps in education and life, even when they have only attended the school for a short time.

- Most pupils in Key Stage 2 are new to the school. However, their mathematics and English work has already demonstrated good progress, for example in their mental mathematics work, in the ways in which they join in individual or group lessons and in their willingness to read or write or express ideas. Individuals who have been in the school for longer have made good progress in English and mathematics and in their topic work. Work in books shows good progress in a range of simple writing tasks.
- Pupils at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 make similarly good progress, although many have lost much ground from their end of Year 6 levels when at other schools because of their disrupted education to date. Pupils' good progress means that many do make up ground lost previously, but attainment overall is lower than those of others of their age because some arrive too late at the school to catch up completely. Work in books shows pupils to be making good progress in English, for example in their understanding of characterisation or imagery, and in mathematics, from their starting points.
- Cohorts are small and so results vary from year to year. However the school is well set up to promote individual pupils' talents. Consequently in recent years sixth form and other pupils have achieved at the higher levels in subjects such as mathematics and art, and merit awards in their BTEC qualifications in music or physical education. Individual pupils in the sixth form this year are on track to achieve Level 3 qualifications in art and information technology and improved qualifications at Level 2 in mathematics and physical education, compared with their Year 11 performance. Pupils taking courses at alternative providers or schools make good progress and complete a range of recognised Level 1 and Level 2 awards including in hair and beauty, motor vehicle studies and animal care.
- Achievement is not outstanding because a few more able pupils throughout the school are not challenged sufficiently by the work they are given, and because achievement in science and writing lags behind that in other subjects. Pupils' lack of confidence in writing sometimes holds them back in other subjects such as humanities, or limits the specific courses that they might choose. New approaches in Key Stage 2 and Years 7 and 8 mean that in these groups, pupils are now engaging more readily with writing. This is to be extended further throughout the school.

The sixth form provision

is good

- The sixth form provision is well led and managed and is a rapidly improving part of the school's work. Leaders have built up strong links with other schools and providers, so that they are able to offer individually tailored programmes for each student that set them up well for next steps and challenge them effectively. Leaders keep a close eye on the quality of teaching, on attendance, behaviour and students' progress on their courses whether at the school or in alternative provision.
- Students in the sixth form are well taught. Teachers have high expectations of students, and students respond well to the challenges they are set. Students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to achieve their targets. Teachers understand each student's particular learning needs very well, including, for example, the challenges linked to any specific learning need. They equip students well with strategies for dealing with these when they are not at school.
- Students take a range of courses designed to strengthen their functional and core skills in English and mathematics and personal study, as well as those that build on their strengths. Students are set to achieve a range of academic and vocational qualifications including Level 3 qualifications in sports studies, art and ICT.
- Students take part in a range of community events and activities that support their independence and personal development extremely well. These include supporting younger students and new arrivals in the school and taking part in Duke of Edinburgh award schemes.
- Staff teams, including instructors, work well together to support students learning and preparation for

next steps. Excellent relationships and mutual respect were evident and make a significant contribution to students' positive attitudes towards their learning and more consistent ability to take responsibility for their own learning. However behaviour and safety are not outstanding because students still do have outbursts or use inappropriate language occasionally. Staff manage such incidents well. This, plus careful risk assessments and consistent application of procedures and checks, mean that the work to keep students safe is good.

- Students make good progress on their courses, wherever these take place because of the strong tutorial support available and the ways in which the school helps students to take increasing responsibility for and pride in their achievements. Students have many opportunities to practise skills in a range of settings and in their community and work-related experiences. Good links with local schools and colleges are set to broaden further the range of courses available and the ways in which the school challenges students to achieve even more.

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 GOV.UK website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook.

School details

Unique reference number	133478
Inspection number	463026
DfE registration number	893/6025

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Independent special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	47
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	6
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Options Group
Chair	Graham Baker
Headteacher	Julia Saint
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2014
Annual fees (day pupils)	£83408
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