

# Young Options College

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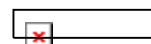
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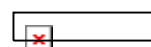
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## Introduction and summary

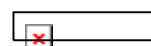


## Purpose and scope of the inspection



This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the school



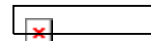
Young Options College is part of the Options Group PLC which provides 52-week residential and educational facilities for a range of young people. The college provides education for a maximum of 40 pupils with emotional difficulties and challenging behaviour in the age-range 9 -16. It is situated on a large campus in a rural environment four miles from Bridgenorth, Shropshire.

The college has an executive director and a head of education. There are 21 pupils on roll, all of whom are accommodated in the Young Options children's homes. All the pupils attending Young Options have 'looked-after' status and are placed by social services departments from across the country. Many of the pupils have statements of special educational need (SEN) for emotional, social and behavioural difficulties.

The original school building was destroyed by fire in 2001 and replaced by new buildings which accommodate the older pupils. Pupils between the age of 9 and 11 are taught on the same site but in separate accommodation. Planning permission has been granted for a new college to be built in the vicinity and this is due to open in 2006. At the time of inspection the school was applying to the Department for Education and Skills for Approval status as a school for pupils with emotional and

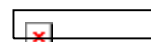
behavioural difficulties.

## Summary of main findings



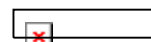
Young Options College is a good school. The curriculum is good, particularly with regard to enrichment activities. Pupils make good progress in their emotional development. Teaching in the secondary department is good, and in some cases excellent. Teaching in the primary department sometimes lacks sufficient challenge for the pupils to produce work in line with their abilities. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and provision for pupils' social and moral development is good. Welfare, health and safety issues are well-managed. Accommodation and resources are good and make a significant contribution to pupils' academic and personal development. There are good relationships with external partners and agencies. Procedures for collating and recording assessment data are good, but the information gathered is not always used to its best effect.

## What the school does well



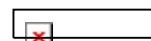
- it provides activities which impact positively on the pupils' learning and social development;
- it successfully motivates pupils to re-engage with learning;
- it fosters good relationships between staff and pupils, which has a very positive impact on the young people's emotional development; and
- it enriches learning through the effective use of the local community and its facilities.

## What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations



- attend to the issues raised in section 3; and
- provide information to parents and partners as outlined in section 6 of this report.

## Next steps

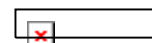


Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

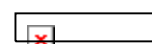
- raise pupils expectations of what they can achieve;
- share a clear behaviour policy with pupils;
- extend the pupils' opportunities to become more corporately responsible;
- develop self- and peer-assessment for academic achievement and personal

- development; and
- use assessment data more effectively to inform teachers' planning.

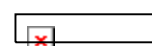
## Compliance with the regulations for registration



### 1. The quality of education provided by the school



#### The quality of the curriculum



The quality of the curriculum is good, and meets all the requirements for registration. It is based on the National Curriculum and successfully promotes the emotional, personal and social development of pupils. Some pupils have numerous failed placements before attending Young Options College. The school places a strong emphasis on developing pupils' emotional resilience by establishing stability and consistency. The building of trusting relationships between all staff and pupils is crucial and the school is very effective in achieving this. The twice-daily tutorial system plays a valuable role in forging good relationships and in dealing with pastoral issues.

The school provides 52-week placements for all pupils and, in response to their needs, operates a 9-term year. This means that most holiday breaks are one week long, apart from the summer, which is a 4-week break. This helps to provide pupils with educational opportunities across the whole year. The school offers a high degree of flexibility to meet individual need. Academic work is carried out in the morning and in the afternoon pupils participate in a range of varied options such as beauty treatment, sport or quad biking. Pupils enjoy these experiences which are an effective feature of the curriculum, encouraging pupils' personal development.

The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good. It is taught as a discrete subject on a weekly basis, but opportunities are also taken by the education staff to reinforce aspects of PSHE in other lessons and tutorials. The programme effectively covers important and relevant issues concerning drugs, smoking, racism, relationships and sexual health. The development of pupils' self-reliance and opportunities for them to take responsibilities within the school setting are satisfactory. These opportunities tend to be negotiated at an individual level. There are no strategies for pupils to be included in general decision-making.

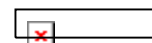
The work-related opportunities offered to pupils are very good. The school has established very good links with a wide range of placement providers, such as B&Q, a local golf club, hotel and engineering workshop. These placements are very well supervised and are invaluable in preparing pupils for adult life and developing self-esteem and confidence. The school has good links with the Connexions service.

A range of accreditation including GCSE, AQA units and ASDAN awards is available. However, the choices offered are limited and not enough pupils are encouraged to achieve nationally recognised qualifications.

There is good liaison between the residential care homes and the school. There are twice-daily meetings and more detailed fortnightly meetings where care and education staff exchange

information about each individual pupil. When appropriate, pupils are given homework and this is carried out in the residential homes.

### **The quality of the teaching and assessment**



The quality of teaching is good or better in the majority of lessons. Some excellent teaching was seen, and only one lesson was unsatisfactory. The most significant feature of very good teaching is the high expectations teachers have about what pupils can achieve, coupled with enthusiasm, knowledge of their subject and the pace they inject into their lessons. In the best lessons these skills have a very positive impact on pupils' learning. For example older boys are enthusiastically rebuilding discarded computers, showing very good skills and understanding. They have been entirely motivated by the enthusiasm of the subject specialist and the expectation that they will be successful. Teachers plan lessons according to the specific needs of the pupils and provide stimulating resources which interest them. As a result of this good practice, many pupils re-engage with learning and make steady progress, in spite of their histories of disrupted education.

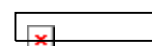
Relationships between adults and pupils are very good and staff treat all pupils fairly and sympathetically. The management of behaviour is satisfactory in most instances. Where it is managed well staff are consistent in their practice and have a clear understanding of strategies for diffusing potentially challenging behaviour. Some staff do not have the skills to manage extreme challenging behaviour and both teaching and learning are adversely affected as a consequence. In these less successful lessons teaching techniques are unimaginative and resources unstimulating.

The termly assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is good and data on pupils' achievements is recorded through an efficient tracking system. However, the information gathered is not used effectively to inform both teaching and planning of the curriculum. Neither teachers nor pupils can assess what has been achieved against individual targets during lessons. Although all pupils make some measurable progress in line with their abilities, the outcome for many in terms of what they may achieve through accredited qualifications are reliant on whether or not they wish to participate. Consequently, few pupils opt to enter nationally recognised examinations. However, when teachers successfully communicate their high expectations of what can be achieved, a few pupils are encouraged to progress to external accreditation.

#### ***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

## **2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**



The provision for pupils' social and moral development is good. Pupils are encouraged to share tasks such as First Aid at the football match and organising teams for competitive sports. Mealtimes are good opportunities for social development and interaction. Many pupils have histories of high mobility, moving regularly from one placement to another over a short space of time. Consequently when they are admitted to the school some are unable to cope with group settings and need intensive one-to-one support. Over time, they make sufficient progress to tolerate group social situations and learn to work co-operatively. The range of outdoor pursuit activities and sports options are excellent opportunities to promote pupils' social development. Staff are very good role models and implement a strong moral code. Pupils are taught right from wrong and the

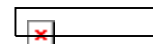
consequences of their actions are discussed with them.

The provision for pupil's spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. The tutorial system covers some aspects of spirituality and opportunities are provided for them to reflect. Pupils are encouraged to appreciate cultural diversity and respect the values and beliefs of others through a thoughtfully planned programme of religious education, PSHE and citizenship. Opportunities are provided for pupils to experience multi-cultural dimensions, especially through food and major religious and national celebrations. Art and music are also used to explore elements of different cultures.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils**



The provision for the pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. Procedures for dealing with bullying are good and all staff take this issue very seriously. However, the anti-bullying policy does not take into account the advice contained in the DfES guidelines. The present policy is not in a format which is accessible for pupils. The school has very good procedures for dealing with child protection issues and has effective links with the local social services. It has comprehensive risk assessment procedures covering a wide range of activities. The school does not have a policy covering off-site educational visits.

The system for rewarding and promoting the good behaviour of pupils is confused. Care staff, teachers and pupils are unclear under what circumstances rewards are given. Staff do not have a clear understanding of sanctions that are available when pupils misbehave. This lack of clarity results in an inconsistent approach to behaviour management. The school is in the process of reviewing its policy and practice.

The school has effective arrangements for the provision of care and welfare and is regularly monitored in conjunction with the Young Options residential provision. There are thorough health and safety arrangements, which are overseen by the school's health and safety officer.

Pupil supervision is very good. Staff have received appropriate training in physical restraint. A record of sanctions is kept but these are held in each pupil's files which means that data cannot be tracked or analysed easily.

Arrangements for the registration of admission and attendance are efficient and meet the requirements. The school has a written statement to ensure it complies with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

The school meets all but two of the regulations.

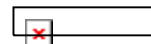
***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

In order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- prepare and implement a written policy to prevent bullying, taking into account the

- DfES guidance (paragraph 3(2)(a)); and
- write and implement a policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school which has regard to DfES guidance (paragraph 3(2)(c)).

#### 4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff



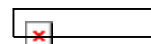
There are very effective administrative systems in place to ensure the suitability of newly appointed staff. These are organised centrally through the administrative processes of the Options Group. Thorough checks are made prior to the appointment of all adults employed by the school who are in contact with pupils. Appropriate checks are carried out, before appointments are confirmed, on the authenticity of references, medical information and qualifications.

There are sufficient and suitably qualified staff to meet the needs of the pupils in all settings. Induction procedures for newly appointed staff are thorough.

##### ***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

#### 5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



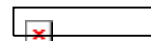
The accommodation is good, despite being mainly located in temporary buildings. These are of a high quality and the site provides a good standard of educational accommodation and resources. The school is located in a very pleasant rural setting and buildings on the campus have been adapted imaginatively to meet the needs of the pupils. There are specialist rooms for all practical subjects, including a large and very well-resourced music room. This provides pupils with opportunities to use a range of instruments and sound systems, motivating them to collaborate in the production of their own music. The standard of decoration in all classrooms is good and enhanced by attractive displays of pupils' work. The buildings are well-maintained and pupils clearly respect and look after their environment.

Classrooms are ample in size for the number of pupils who use them. The separate accommodation for primary-aged pupils has been suitably adapted to their needs and is adequately resourced. There are good resources for information and communication technology in a discrete suite, but also within all classrooms and practical rooms. Outside there are well-maintained hard-surfaced areas specifically designed for play and physical activities. The large playing fields on the campus, and the availability of local sporting facilities for swimming and outdoor education, make valuable contributions to pupils' physical and social development.

##### ***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

#### 6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The school does not provide all the required information. A substantial number of parents, carers and partners completed and returned their pre-inspection questionnaires. The majority feel well-informed about their children's progress and are comfortable about contacting the school. A few were unclear about some aspects such as the complaints procedure and homework arrangements. Parents and carers receive very clear and comprehensive six-monthly reports, and reports through the annual review process.

Parents, carers and other partners are provided with basic information about the care and education provided by the school through the prospectus. There are some important omissions which are listed below.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

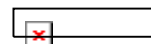
No.

***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- make available the school's address and telephone number, the name of the head teacher and the full name, address and telephone number of the school proprietors (paragraph 6(2)(a) and paragraph 6(2)(b));
- provide particulars of the school's policy on admissions and arrangements for exclusions (paragraph 6(2)(e));
- provide particulars of the school's educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements and for pupils for whom English is an additional language (paragraph 6(2)(f));
- provide particulars of policies relating to bullying, child protection, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour, and the sanctions to be adopted in the event of misbehaving (paragraph 6(2)(h));
- provide particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations (paragraph 6(2)(i));
- provide details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j)); and
- provide information about the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 6(2)(k)).

**7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints**



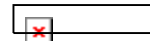
The school has a comprehensive complaints procedure, which fully meets the requirements of the regulations. However, the policy is complex and is not easily accessible, particularly to pupils. The school is considering developing a simplified version for them.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.



## School details



Name of school:	Young Options College		
DfES ref number:	893/6025893/6025		
Type of school:	Special		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	9 - 16 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 13,	Girls 8,	Total 21
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 11,	Girls 5,	Total 16
Annual fees (day pupils):	£157,128 - £257,400		
Address of school:	Higford		
	Shifnal		
	Shropshire		
	TF11 9ET		
E-mail address:	office@higfordhall.co.uk		
Telephone number:	01952 636110		
Fax number:	01952 632111		
Headteacher:	Mr Andrew Large		
Proprietor:	Mr Trevor Price		
Lead Inspector:	Mrs Helen Maskew		
Dates of inspection:	23 - 26 May 2005		

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