

Inspection report
CYCES The Together Trust
Independent special school
DfES ref no: 356/6025

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 13 – 14 June 2006

Introduction

Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 162A of the Education Act 2005 as part of pilot inspection arrangements 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

CYCES (Child and Youth Care Education Service) provides for the education of 36 boys and girls between the ages of 8 and 16. CYCES is run by The Together Trust which provides residential care, foster care, adoption, social work and educational services. The school provides education for day pupils who are in two main groups: children looked after by Local Authorities and who live in children's homes; children living at home but placed in CYCES by Local Authorities for a range of reasons. All the children placed at the school are unable to access a place at a mainstream school or maintained special school, and many have been previously permanently excluded. The main needs of the pupils are related to behavioural, social and emotional difficulties and many of them have very complex needs.

Overall evaluation of the school

CYCES is providing satisfactory care and education for the young people admitted. The quality of teaching and learning is at least satisfactory and around half the teaching is good. Pupils are well behaved, show broadly positive attitudes and demonstrate good relationships with teachers. The school complies with most of the independent schools' regulations.

Quality of education

Curriculum

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum. It meets the needs of most of its pupils by placing high emphasis on the key skills of literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT). As part of its curriculum policy, the school does not routinely provide all subjects of the National Curriculum or religious education. However, some of the pupil's statements of special need state that they should have 'full access to the National Curriculum and Religious Education'. The school, therefore, does not provide a broad enough curriculum for these pupils, and does not meet this regulation. The curriculum for older pupils leads to externally accredited courses, including entry level certification, AQA units of accreditation or GCSE. The curriculum includes good careers and vocational experiences so that pupils are able to go on to further education. The school has a high amount of emphasis on personal, social and health education (PSHE) and for

some pupils this is appropriate, but planning for the different aspects of Citizenship is not given enough attention.

The planning of the content of subjects is satisfactory. Medium term plans provide teachers with units of work in each subject to be taught to different class groups during each term. However, the make-up of class groups sometime change when new pupils are admitted, and there is no overall information about which pupils have covered specific units of work and whether they may be repeating any. The short term plans for lessons provide learning objectives but these are not taken a step further by identifying what pupils of different abilities might be expected to achieve. There is no assessment in terms of achievement or attainment to allow staff to track pupils' progress across the curriculum. However tracking is much better in the subjects or units of work which are derived from external accreditation.

Curriculum development is currently not well co-ordinated. Changes in staffing have resulted in some subjects being without any leadership, and further staff changes are taking place. Co-ordinators lack specific job descriptions and they do not have sufficient guidance for their work.

Teaching and assessment

Teaching is satisfactory overall. Some teachers teach well, even though some are teaching subjects in which they have very little expertise. Teachers ensure that they manage the behaviour very well through firm but friendly relationships. Some demonstrate expertise in diverting potential outbursts and disruption through skilful introduction of alternative activities. The majority of lessons start with a recap of the previous lesson and a sharing of what they pupils will be learning. Teachers use a variety of activities and make sure that no time is wasted in lessons. The plenary in the best lessons reviews the objectives and also the achievements of pupils. Occasionally there is self-evaluation by pupils which allows them to know how well they are doing. Those teachers who have been in the school a length of time know the pupils well and identify their needs and their abilities. The weakness in teaching is the lack of recording the pupils' attainment or achievement against the learning outcomes set in the planning.

Assessment is inadequate and does not meet the two required regulations. There is no assessment co-ordinator, and the school does not use any initial assessment when pupils come into the school. It, therefore, does not have any secure evidence on which to plan learning objectives or targets in individual education plans.

Pupils' progress and achievement

Inspection showed that pupils make satisfactory progress in the lessons. However, because of the short comings in the curriculum and assessment, pupils are not always building on previous learning in all subjects. Thus the school cannot fully demonstrate the progress made by pupils and use the information in their planning or to pass onto teachers when class groups change.

Personal development

The personal development of pupils and their spiritual, moral and social awareness are satisfactory. The strengths lie in the way the school develops and increases pupils' self esteem and self confidence so that they become better behaved, develop better attitudes to others and to learning. They develop good relationships with other pupils and show politeness to staff. They take care of their learning environment and the resources, and are developing a responsibility for decisions through the development of the school council. The majority of pupils enjoy coming to school although there are a few pupils who have a continuing history of disaffection and find it difficult to come to school regularly. Pupils through the progress they make in basic numeracy and literacy, and their vocational experiences increase their ability to be earning adults. The main area for improvement within the personal development of pupils is their experiences and awareness of their own culture, along with those of others. In this area the school does not meet the regulation.

The welfare, health and safety of pupils

The procedures and policies for ensuring the health and safety of the young people are satisfactory. They are coherent and cover all the necessary areas described in Department for Education and Skills (DfES) guidance documents. In practice the school is run with an evident priority for the pupils' welfare. Policies such as those on child protection, anti-bullying, behaviour management appropriately guide the practice of teachers and other workers.

CYCES has organised a healthy eating initiative and the principles of the provision of healthy food and the encouragement of healthy eating are made clear in documentation. Drinking water is available to pupils and there is a programme of outdoor pursuits and regular exercise in place. Pupils are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles and to stay fit.

The school has recognised the need to improve access to pupils with physical disabilities. As yet there is no planning for the improvements necessary to comply with the Disabilities Discrimination Act (DDA). The governing body is aware of the need to comply, and training has been undertaken to allow such planning to be put in place.

Organisation of the school

The school is owned by The Together Trust which provides education and care in a number of locations. The arrangements for proprietor and the appointment of staff comply completely with regulations, for example, there are clear records of all staff

having Criminal Records Bureau checks. Processes for the appointment of staff are good and high quality records are kept of qualifications, references from previous employers and health checks etc.

The school is housed in buildings appropriate to education. They are well maintained and show no signs of dilapidation. The classrooms and common areas used by pupils are in a well decorated state, and provide generally light and bright accommodation for learning. The classrooms can accommodate the small group sizes organised. The school has some specialist areas, for example, food technology, ICT, science and art.

The school does not meet some of the regulations related to premises and accommodation. Pupils with physical disability, such as wheelchair users, can access the ground floor, but no access to the first floor is possible. While there is a toilet suitable for the use of people with disabilities on the ground floor, there are insufficient toilets for use of the pupils. If the pupil toilets on the ground floor were brought back into use the regulation would be met. Similarly the regulation concerning the provision of a sick room is not met because of the absence of a wash basin.

The school has an informative prospectus for parents or carers. It describes the provision well, but does not contain references to how it meets the needs of pupils who have English as an additional language. In addition, it needs to inform parents of the range of additional information the school which might be of interest to parents. The school does not meet the regulations for these two areas. The school provides local authorities, parents and carers with reports which describe the progress pupils have made but these could be further improved by the inclusion of levels of attainment.

The procedures for handling complaints meet most of the relevant regulations. Parents and carers are made aware through the prospectus that a full copy of the policy and procedures is available to them on request. The appeals panel is not fully described in the policy documents available to parents and carers. It does not stipulate that there will be at least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. The policy makes it clear the complainant, chair of governors, chief executive of the trust, chairman of trustees will be sent copies of decisions and recommendations. However, it is not stipulated that the headteacher and the person complained about are to receive copies. There is also no assurance of confidentiality in these matters in the policy document provided to parents.

The organisation of the school is satisfactory although it fails to meet a significant number of regulations. Teachers in the school are working very hard to provide education appropriate to the needs of pupils. Their efforts are constrained by the current weaknesses in assessment and tracking procedures that do not sufficiently inform teachers' planning.

What the school must do to comply with regulations

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 *and the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 (delete this reference if the school meets the DDA requirements)* the school should:

- plan the curriculum and teaching programmes to match pupils' aptitudes by making assessments of their attainment and needs (paragraph 1(2)(b));
- ensure that pupils statements of need are complied with including the access to the full National Curriculum (paragraph 1(2)(e));
- provide pupils with a balanced curriculum matched to their achievement that does not have subject gaps (paragraph 1(2)(i));
- use assessment to establish the starting point for pupils learning in order for them to make progress (paragraph 1(3)(d));
- introduce a framework for assessment by which pupils' progress can be evaluated (paragraph 1(3)(g));
- put in place a framework for the evaluation of pupils' performance that refers to either the schools own aims or by national norms (paragraph 1(4));
- implement educational activities that allow pupils to develop an appreciation, tolerance and respect for their own and other cultures (paragraph 2(e));
- draw up plans to improve the access to the school such that people with special needs can enter and leave the school in safety and comfort, and in order to comply with the requirements of the DDA and to allow (paragraph 5(h));
- provide sufficient toilets for pupils as described in regulations (paragraph 5(k));
- make modification to the facilities for ill pupils such that there is a sink and secure storage for medical materials in the designated room (paragraph 5(l));
- provide parents with particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language (paragraph 6 (2)(f));
- inform parents that they may request: particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year including the results of any public examinations; the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 6(2)(i) and (k));
- ensure that the information for parents on the complaints procedure describes the membership of the panel accurately (paragraph 7(f)); and
- make clear in the complaints policy that the headteacher and the person complained about are to receive a copy of findings and recommendations,

and that all correspondence and records are to be kept confidential (paragraph 7 (i) and (k)).

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