

Radical Education

Independent Special School

Inspection report

DfES Registration Number	909/6050
Unique Reference Number	132112
Inspection number	301590
Inspection dates	23–24 May 2007
Reporting inspector	George Derby

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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

Radical Education is part of Radical Services, an organisation which provides crisis intervention and care. It was registered in 2003 as a day school and is located separately from the company's children's homes. It has places for up to six pupils, aged 14–16 years, who usually stay between two months and two and a half years. At the time of the inspection, four pupils were on roll.

Pupils have severe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) and are considerably disaffected. Their mainstream school attendance has been poor and many have been in trouble with the police. They do not usually have learning difficulties but display considerable gaps in their knowledge and low attainment because of their disrupted education and home lives. Pupils are taught separately and for the majority of the time do not mix with each other.

The school's approach is to work from pupils' interests and needs. It aims to provide a safe environment, to help pupils re-engage in education and take ownership of their learning, and for them to develop into confident, happy and knowledgeable young people who are able to interact constructively. The school has not been inspected previously and over the past six years there have been three headteachers.

Evaluation of the school

Radical Education provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils; it meets some but not all of its aims. Its teaching, curriculum and care are all satisfactory. It tries hard to re-engage pupils, many of whom are reluctant to join in with educational activities and is largely successful in doing so. Some pupils, generally those who are on longer term placement, do well while others have a more limited programme and do not achieve as much. Overall, the pupils make satisfactory progress in their academic and personal development. A number of regulations are not met.

Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory; it is broad, adequately planned and is able to be

sufficiently extended for pupils who stay medium- to long-term. There is a good balance between academic and vocational activities. The school's emphasis is rightly on enjoyment and achievement and it works hard to engage pupils through activities in which they show interest. The 'core' curriculum consists of English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and personal, social and health education (PSHE), which includes citizenship. Pupils mainly work through unit awards, where there is great stress on them completing tasks, something which they have found hard to do in the past. Their response is generally positive, especially when work is planned to provide the right level of challenge and motivation. Some longer-term pupils eventually take Entry Level Certificates, while GCSE mathematics is offered as a next step. Shorter-term pupils are able to create a 'package' of education from what is on offer, although English and mathematics are always compulsory. However, they do not always choose a full package and so for part of the week they are not undertaking any education.

Through the provision of bronze and silver 'challenges' from the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards, additional subjects such as physical education, materials technology, humanities and art are provided. Tasks are completed towards these challenges and assessed by staff. There is a good level of challenge for pupils studying towards certificates, but for other pupils the level of the work does not always build up quickly enough and for some it is too 'comfortable'. Where work is carried out off-site, such as by care staff during the 'home programme', there is little monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. Time for learning over the course of a week is much shorter than recommended nationally.

Disruption to outdoor pursuits and science has resulted from recent staff illness. Technology, through workshop activities, is a success and engages and inspires pupils because it is practical and challenging. Work experience, careers work and links with Connexions are well planned and all help pupils to think carefully about their future.

Where pupils have a statement of special educational needs (SEN) these are usually in relation to pupils' BESD. However, objectives which relate to improving pupils' social development and ability to make relationships with peers are not met. Pupils' individual education plans rarely address this area and opportunities in school are limited. Hence, the school does not fully meet its aims.

Teaching is satisfactory. Relationships between pupils and staff are good and humour is used effectively to engage the pupils. Activities often centre around completing tasks in lessons and following instructions. This is a good starting point for new pupils totally disengaged from school. However, the lesson length of one hour is far too long for most pupils. A narrow range of teaching techniques is used. As a result of these factors, the pupils' effort sometimes wanes and they lose interest. While computers are used from time to time, there is little use of such resources to motivate the pupils to learn. Pupils are managed firmly but sensitively. Occasionally,

not enough is expected of pupils and the work does not extend their thinking sufficiently. Good links are maintained with care staff. They sit and wait in the school in case there is any disruption. However, there are missed opportunities for them to take part in lessons and to work on some of the things the pupils need to learn during their home programme.

Assessment is satisfactory. A great deal of assessment in relation to the tasks to be achieved for the awards takes place and targets are set in education and behaviour plans. Ongoing assessments are recorded well. These are thorough and used well to adapt future work and approaches. However, opportunities during a lesson to get pupils to reflect on what they have learned are missed. Assessment at the beginning of pupils' placements or at the beginning of units of work is in place but the information gained from this is not always used. While there are systems in place for assessing pupils' attitudes, behaviour and emotional development, these are not consistently used and the school does not have a way of tracking pupils' progress and performance, using national levels or in relation to its own aims.

Pupils' progress is satisfactory and many pupils re-engage with learning and life. The school acknowledges that it is most successful with the long-term pupils and the work stands them in good stead for later life. However, it recognises that it does not always record all of their successes and needs to provide a better range of data to establish how well it is doing. There is less success with some other shorter-term pupils as there are insufficient alternative educational activities to engage pupils from the outset.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory and there are few exclusions or restraints in school. They generally enjoy what is provided. Attendance shows an upward trend and is satisfactory overall, although lateness and poor attendance can be a problem for some medium- and shorter-term pupils.

Pupils are much encouraged by staff, who help them reflect on the right and wrong of what they do and how they can gain school rewards. They know the sanctions that can be applied. Key aspects of moral and social education are a central part of the PSHE programme. However, pupils have virtually no contact with one another and this limits their social development. Contacts with the local community are adequate. Much work goes into improving pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem. This is successful because staff have a good understanding of pupils' backgrounds. Pupils take the first steps to being prepared for their future lives, although for some it takes a long time to establish trust.

The PSHE and citizenship programme provides lessons on sex education and drugs awareness. Pupils also gain an understanding and knowledge of public institutions

and services in England. Pupils say they are not always guided into making healthy choices and at school are allowed to bring 'fizzy' drinks and to smoke in a designated place. There is not enough support given to helping pupils with their smoking addiction and with health promotion generally.

The cultural development of pupils is adequately promoted. Through aspects of PSHE, art, English and food technology pupils learn about cultures and traditions. There are some opportunities for them to learn about other cultures, faiths and religions through work in ASDAN, but not enough is done to prepare them for living in a multicultural society.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Welfare, health and safety are satisfactory. The school's prime aim to keep children safe is well met. The school has comprehensive policies and procedures to support safeguarding, health and safety (including risk assessment in school, home, workshop and on visits), fire safety and first aid. However, staff training for designated first aiders has just expired. There is a good behaviour policy. Although the anti-bullying policy does not fully meet requirements, the school is vigilant in this area. The network of support provided through the company's care provision, such as transactional analysis and equine therapy, adds considerably to what is provided in school. Child protection procedures are clear and well established, although updated training is now required. Not all relevant staff are included on the school's central safeguarding list. However, records at the company's head office are comprehensive and list all information required. The attendance register is not always accurately marked and the admission register omits some required information. The school's plan to improve accessibility in relation to the Disability Discrimination Act (2002) is inadequate.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school carries out all necessary checks on all staff and fully complies with regulations.

School's premises and accommodation

The accommodation is satisfactory. It is a large terraced house adapted for the purpose of education. It has specialist rooms where ICT, science, cooking and art are taught. There is a small external recreation area to the rear. There are no separate toilets for staff and pupils, as required. The workshop, 10 miles away, is a good facility. Physical activities take place off-site using the local environment, sport centres or through the outdoor pursuits programme.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Information provided is satisfactory. The school provides clear, accurate and up to date information for parents, prospective parents, carers and social workers. Reports on pupils' progress are thorough and very regularly updated. However, no information is provided to local authorities on how funding received is spent and the annual review of a pupil's statement has not been held.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's policy and procedures fully meet requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- ensure there full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (paragraph 1(2)(a)(i))
- where pupils have a statement of special educational need, ensure the education provided fulfils its requirements (paragraph 1(2)(e))
- establish effective teaching methods and suitable activities to be used and plan and use class time wisely (paragraph 1(3)(c))
- put in place a framework by which pupil performance can be evaluated by reference to either the school's own aims and/or, by national norms (paragraph 1(4)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (standard 2) and must:

- ensure that pupils acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures, in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions (paragraph 2(e)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- prepare and implement a written policy to prevent bullying which has regard to the DfES guidance *Bullying: don't suffer in silence* (paragraph 3(2)(a))

- maintain a central list of checks on all staff who have contact with pupils during the school day and ensure that the school's child protection coordinator has up to date training in compliance with DfES guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education* (2007) (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- ensure that all staff who have responsibility for first aid have up-to-date training (paragraph 3(6))
- maintain an admission register and an attendance register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 3(9)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- ensure there are sufficient washrooms for staff and pupils which take account of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(k)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- ensure that where a pupil who is registered at the school is wholly or partly funded by the local authority, an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil is submitted to the local authority and on request to the Secretary of State (paragraph 6(7))
- supply information on pupils with statements of SEN to the responsible local authority as may reasonably be required for the purpose of the annual review of the statement (paragraph 6(8)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

School details

Name of school	Radical Education		
DfES number	909/6050		
Unique reference number	132112		
Type of school	Special day school for pupils with BESD		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 2003		
Age range of pupils	14–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll	Boys: 2	Girls: 2	Total: 4
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 2	Girls: 2	Total: 4
Annual fees (day pupils)	£71,175 - £85,848		
Address of school	Not disclosed		
Telephone number	01228631770		
Fax number	01228894024		
Email address	education@radicalservices.org.uk		
Headteacher	Mr S Ringrose		
Proprietor	Mr S Roberts		
Reporting inspector	Mr George Derby		
Dates of inspection	22–23 May 2007		