

Young Options College

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	8936025
Unique Reference Number	133478
Inspection number	322264
Inspection dates	29–30 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Marian Harker HMI

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).

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 Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Young Options College is an independent day school for boys and girls aged 9 to 18 years. It is part of the Young Options organisation which *'provides comprehensive care, education and therapy services for Looked After Children and Young People with complex and severe behavioural, psychological and psychiatric difficulties.'*

The school is situated on a large campus in a semi rural environment just outside Shifnal in Shropshire. The school moved to this site in 2006 and provides purpose built accommodation for up to 50 students with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Approximately two thirds of the students have a statement of special educational need and three quarters are in residential care within the wider Young Options organisation. Students are drawn from a large number of local authorities across the United Kingdom. There are currently 23 full-time and 3 part-time students on roll. The school was previously inspected in 2005.

Evaluation of the school

Young Options College provides a good standard of education and care for its students. It is particularly successful in achieving its aims of *'working together as a team with the young person to: build on strengths and interests; engineer success not failure; create achievable aims – in a structured and supportive environment'*. Students value being treated as equals and appreciate the high level of support they receive. Parents and carers are supportive of the school. The teaching is good and students make good progress in their learning and personal development. The school meets the majority of the requirements for registration.

Quality of education

The overall quality of education is good. The good curriculum is well adapted to meet the needs and aptitudes of the students. The school is successful in achieving its curriculum aim, *'to build a portfolio of qualifications at the appropriate level'*, as it offers a good range of appropriate externally accredited courses for a wide range of abilities. More able students achieve GCSE qualifications, whilst lower attaining students are successful in a range of appropriate courses. There is a good variety of vocational courses, which students can follow. However, some aspects of the courses offered, such as hair and beauty, and some of the construction trades, such as woodwork, metal work and car mechanics, are limited by a lack of equipment, suitable teaching space and due regard for regular risk assessments.

A strength of the school is the good range of activities offered to students during the weekly curriculum enrichment day. This includes course work extension activities, sports, leisure and vocational opportunities. Students thoroughly enjoy these sessions. Extra-curricular activities such as football, judo and camping trips further enhance the good curriculum. The Five Peaks Hill Walking Challenge has been a particular success in developing the personal and social skills of the students.

Students receive good advice and support for their future through careers guidance provided by the Connexions service. They are well prepared for the world of work through a good range of work experience placements, such as catering within the school kitchen and working in hair salons or motor vehicle workshops in the community. However, links with local colleges, so that students can follow courses in a more adult environment and be prepared for life after school, are underdeveloped.

Teaching and assessment are good and the students make good progress. This is because all staff know the students very well and there are comprehensive arrangements in place for the induction of new students. Medium and long-term units of work are carefully planned to meet the needs and interests of the individual. However, some short-term lesson planning does not take account of the wealth of assessment information available, including individual education plan targets. Teachers make good use of a range of appropriate activities in lessons and move quickly from one to another. As a result, students are motivated to learn, behaviour is good and relationships are positive. Teachers and support assistants work very effectively together and provide a high level of support. However, on occasions, adults do too much to help the students, such as answering questions and giving out resources. This has the effect of limiting the opportunities for students to develop their independent learning skills.

Students are referred to Young Options College through their local authorities. They receive a home visit before they start and their educational and psychological needs are carefully assessed. Students receive individual tuition until they are ready to be integrated into the wider school. As a result, individual education programmes are very carefully constructed to ensure that the needs of pupils' statements of special educational need are fully met.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Many students demonstrate a sense of achievement and success through gaining a wide range of nationally recognised qualifications. This does much to promote their personal development. Behaviour is generally good and well managed by staff. As a result there is a calm atmosphere around the school. The behaviour log indicates that when incidents occur they usually only require minimum intervention by staff. There are rare occasions when physical restraint is used. Most students have a keen sense of right and wrong. They respond well to expectations of appropriate behaviour and

treat each other with respect. Some exhibit challenging behaviour on entry to the school, but over time this improves substantially.

The school is particularly successful in re-engaging students in their learning. This is clearly demonstrated in their attendance. Most students have come from situations of poor or non-existent attendance. Records indicate that attendance for virtually all students improves significantly during their time at the school. Students make a positive contribution to their school and wider community. For example, the school council has been recently established and is beginning to make useful suggestions for improvements. Students actively support charity events and sell dog kennels and bird tables they have made to the local community. Good use is made of the national sports centre at Lilleshall, Wolf Mountain climbing wall and local sport facilities.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The welfare, health and safety of the students are good. Procedures to ensure their safety are robust and all required policies are in place. Appropriate risk assessments are carried out for activities both on and away from the school site. However, some risk assessments require updating in light of the introduction of hair and beauty and construction trade courses. Students are taught to be aware of potential hazards and how to be safe in lessons. Rules are clearly established and students are well supervised at all times. Routine checks are made on electrical equipment and fire evacuations are practised regularly. Robust procedures for first aid are in place and a good number of adults have been trained. All staff have undergone child protection training and the designated person has completed training to the required standard to meet current legislation.

Students report that they feel safe in school and are well-supported by the staff. The personal, social and health education programme is satisfactory. The programme covers key areas of learning but some areas such as substance misuse and sex and relationships are not adequately covered. Healthy break and lunch choices are provided by the school and cookery lessons promote healthy eating. Although the school is a non smoking site, several students have established smoking habits which the school manages well by restricting opportunities for smoking to a minimum. The school fully meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school fully complies with the regulations in respect of the checks it makes on prospective employees with regard to their identity and suitability to work with children.

School's premises and accommodation

The school is located in a building that is owned by Young Options organisation. In addition to school accommodation, the building houses offices for Young Options administrative and fostering services. The school has been purpose built and provides excellent internal teaching and recreation areas. Specialist rooms for cookery, art, science, music, and a large sports hall are all good features. Adjacent to the main building there are further facilities for gardening and small workshops projects. However, the accommodation provided for recently introduced vocational courses in hair and beauty, and construction trades does not meet regulations. Insufficient teaching space and resources have been allocated to accommodate these courses.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school has established strong links with parents, carers and outside agencies. Parents and carers are kept well informed through regular review meetings and comprehensive end of year reports. These reports are a helpful summary of each student's progress and attainment in key areas of learning. The prospectus has been recently updated and fully meets requirements.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a clearly written and fair complaints procedure which meets the requirements. A simplified version of the policy has been made available to the students.

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 premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- have regard to the number, age and needs (including any special needs) of pupils, to ensure that all classrooms are appropriate in size to allow effective teaching, and all areas of the school do not compromise health or safety. (paragraph 5 (j)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- ensure that assessment information is used to inform short-term lesson planning.
- provide more opportunities for students to develop their independent learning skills in lessons.
- ensure risk assessments for practical teaching areas are reviewed regularly.

School details

Name of school	Young Options College		
DCSF number	8936025		
Unique reference number	133478		
Type of school	Special		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	15 October 2001		
Age range of pupils	9–18		
Gender of pupils	MI		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 15	Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 15
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 1	Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 1
Number of boarders	Boys: 0	Number of boarders	Boys: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 12	Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 12
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 13	Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 13
Annual fees (day pupils)	£38,950		
Annual fees (boarders)	N/A		
Address of school	Lamledge Lane Shifnal Shropshire TF11 8SD		
Telephone number	01952468220		
Fax number	01952468221		
Email address	school@youngoptions.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Rob Phillips		
Proprietor	Options Group		
Reporting inspector	Marian Harker HMI		
Dates of inspection	29–30 April 2008		