

# The Continuum School Wisbech

Independent Special School

Inspection report

|                          |                             |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| DCSF Registration Number | 873/6033                    |
| Unique Reference Number  | 134179                      |
| Inspection number        | 332445                      |
| Inspection dates         | 28–29 January 2008          |
| Reporting inspector      | Marianick Ellender-Gelé HMI |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended.

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended, the purpose of which is 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

Continuum School Wisbech is an independent school that is part of the Continuum Care and Education Group. The school, previously known as The Bridge School, was last inspected in March 2006. It changed its name and moved to this new site in September 2008. The new school manager also started in September 2008.

The school caters for students aged 9 to 16 years. Almost all live in children's homes or foster homes. All have emotional, behavioural and social difficulties and have been excluded from or unable to attend mainstream education. Students are admitted to the school at any stage during the academic year. There are currently 15 boys on roll aged 11 to 16 years and 12 have a statement of special educational needs.

The school aims to equip young people to contribute to society by developing their social maturity, academic excellence, moral values and respect for the community. There is a strong focus on developing young people's self-esteem through vocational education and practical outdoor activities.

## Evaluation of the school

The quality of education at The Continuum School, Wisbech is good. Staff's dedication, the good teaching and the quality of the curriculum enable students to make good progress. Relationships are good. Behaviour is satisfactory and good for some older students who have attended the school for a longer period. This improved attitude to learning reflects the skilful management of behaviour by staff. Assessment strategies, currently underdeveloped in some aspects, are satisfactory. Provision for the overall welfare, health and safety of students is good. When known as the Bridge School at the last inspection, the general provision was judged as satisfactory; this has improved and it is now good. The new school manager and the staff team ensure that regulations are met and that provision, including outdoor learning and the new premises, meet the needs of students and provide a caring and stimulating environment.

## Quality of education

The Continuum School, Wisbech provides a broad and balanced curriculum, which caters well for these students who have had much discontinuity in their previous

education. The curriculum is good because it is relevant to their particular needs and circumstances. For example, many older students are given practical work experiences at the local cricket club and learn a wide range of skills in groundsmanship and painting and decorating courses. The curriculum is rich in opportunities for younger students to learn through outdoor activities and visits to places of interest. There is a strong focus on literacy and numeracy and good planning for students to develop skills in speaking, writing, and information and communication technology (ICT). For example the use of ICT was very helpful to one student who had to complete an extended piece of writing about a film that he had seen. The use of ICT was a strong motivator which helped him sustain his concentration. Students especially enjoy the creative learning opportunities on offer and this is reflected in their good achievements in food technology, art and music. The effective links with the Connexions service make a significant contribution to students' personal development, careers education and future learning. The school makes good use of local facilities to enhance the curriculum. Visitors to the school have included visits from the Mayor and local councillors who contribute to students' understanding of local and national institutions. The school is currently providing relevant accreditation through the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) Skills for Life and Sports and offers a full range of BTEC Certificates and First Diplomas.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. This represents improvement since the last inspection and ensures that students make good progress and achieve well. Key strengths are the commitment and perseverance of staff, the good relationships they have with students and the expert management of challenging behaviour. The new school manager has implemented an effective programme for cohesive team working and relevant professional development. The move to the new premises has also contributed to improving the teaching because classrooms are located close to one another and staff readily help each other, as and when required. New teachers receive very good support and quickly settle into their roles. Although students prefer practical activities, formal teaching to develop basic skills is done sensitively. Adults in the classroom work together effectively. Lessons are purposeful.

Assessment procedures are satisfactory and teachers know students well. However tracking of academic learning to show the progress that students have made over time is insufficiently robust. Teachers' assessments of progress are not always accurate or detailed. Achievements, in terms of behaviour, are recorded very well. Students are constantly praised and rewarded. Although they find it difficult to concentrate for long periods they do say that 'lessons keep them calm' and that 'teachers are good'.

## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. Students learn to appreciate the difference between right and wrong through the daily life of the school and more generally from the consequences of their

actions. Overall, their behaviour is satisfactory. For some it is very good but a few individuals, especially younger students and those who have recently joined the school, continue to present considerable challenges despite the staff's efforts. Much is done to support students' understanding of themselves and others through the good programme for personal social and health education (PSHE). Praise is used well and the points system for rewards is consistently applied. This develops a sense of responsibility and self-esteem. There are opportunities for students to work with each other although many still find that social situations are stressful. Students learn a range of very useful and essential facts, for example about the role of the fire service or in completion of their modules in the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network programme or PSHE work. There is a systematic programme to promote their knowledge of services and institutions with numerous visits to places of interest.

Students are well prepared for future life. One older student said, 'I am so much better now than two years ago and very confident about taking exams.' There are some opportunities where students are enabled to make a contribution to school life, for example through the school council and their charity work. The school raises awareness about different beliefs and cultures, through special days and events, such as Holocaust Day; this makes a good contribution to promoting racial harmony.

The majority of students have made good improvements in their attendance. When the students are in school, they take a little time to settle in the morning but, once in lessons, they enjoy their learning and their attendance is good. However, a few have very erratic attendance and two have not attended for a very long period. The school is aware of its responsibility in this matter and works well with relevant agencies.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good. The school's promotion of a healthy lifestyle through physical education and food technology is a strength. Students are encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle with many opportunities offered such as the forthcoming Three Peaks Walk Challenge in March 2009 and the regular weekly outdoor activities on Fridays. The school's provision ensures that students stay safe. High priority is given to positive behaviour management. Staff act quickly and intervene effectively when students occasionally lose control. Detailed recording of serious incidents and use of physical restraint enables the leadership to closely monitor the behaviour of individuals. High staffing levels ensure students are effectively supervised at all times. Risk assessments for the premises, off-site visits and classroom activities are effectively implemented. The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All procedures for recruiting staff and safeguarding children comply with the latest guidance. A single central register is in place and all necessary checks have been carried out. Staff are well aware of child protection duties and apply policies effectively.

## School's premises and accommodation

The school's town centre location enables students to access a wide range of additional facilities which include a library, swimming pool, golf centre and local gymnasium. It also has close links with the cricket club, which enables students to use these facilities on a daily basis. The premises enable effective learning and welfare.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Provision of information in the school prospectus contains all of the necessary details for parents, carers and others. Annual reviews of students' statements of special educational needs are carried out appropriately and outcomes are reported to local authorities, parents and carers. Parents and carers receive termly, comprehensive reports about each student's progress and effort.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The complaints procedure meets regulatory requirements. There is a clear and fair policy for handling complaints, copies of which parents and prospective parents know they may request.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

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

- provide a strong and effective framework to assess students' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from such assessment to enable students to make further progress (paragraph 1(3)(g)).

## What the school could do to improve further

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

- make students' targets more specific so that these focus more on the learning and not just on behaviour and share the learning targets with students
- use students' tracking and performance management system to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and improve its impact on students' progress.

# Inspection Judgement Recording Form

| outstanding | good | satisfactory | inadequate |
|-------------|------|--------------|------------|
|-------------|------|--------------|------------|

## The quality of education

|  |  |   |  |  |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| Overall quality of education   |  | ✓ |  |  |
| How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils |  | ✓ |  |  |
| How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs         |  | ✓ |  |  |
| How well pupils make progress in their learning  |  | ✓ |  |  |

## Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

|  |  |   |   |  |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development |  | ✓ |   |  |
| The behaviour of pupils  |  |   | ✓ |  |

## Welfare, health and safety of pupils

|  |  |   |  |  |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils |  | ✓ |  |  |
|--|--|---|--|--|



## School details

|   |  |          |           |
|---|--|----------|-----------|
| Name of school  | The Continuum School, Wisbech  |          |           |
| DCSF number   | 873/6033   |          |           |
| Unique reference number                                       | 134179   |          |           |
| Type of school  | Special, for pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties      |          |           |
| Status  | Independent  |          |           |
| Date school opened  | September 2008   |          |           |
| Age range of pupils   | 9–16   |          |           |
| Gender of pupils  | Mixed  |          |           |
| Number on roll (full-time pupils)                             | Boys: 14   | Girls: 0 | Total: 14 |
| Number on roll (part-time pupils)                             | Boys: 1  | Girls: 0 | Total: 1  |
| Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need | Boys: 12   | Girls: 0 | Total: 12 |
| Number of pupils who are looked after                         | Boys: 10   | Girls: 0 | Total: 10 |
| Annual fees (day pupils)                                      | £ 31,823   |          |           |
| Address of school   | Old Session House<br>32 Somers Road<br>Wisbech<br>Cambridgeshire<br>PE13 1JJ |          |           |
| Telephone number  | 01945 427278   |          |           |
| Fax number  | 01945 429043   |          |           |
| Email address   | mick.coleman@continuumgroup.org.uk   |          |           |
| Headteacher   | Mr Mick Coleman  |          |           |
| Proprietor  | The Continuum Group  |          |           |
| Reporting inspector   | Marianick Ellender-Gelé HMI  |          |           |
| Dates of inspection   | 28–29 January 2009   |          |           |