

On Track Education Centre (Wisbech)

Independent special school inspection report

DCSF registration number 873/6041
Unique reference number 133570
Inspection number 342539
Inspection dates 10-11 December 2009
Reporting inspector Michèle Messaoudi

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

Age group: 11-17

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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.¹

Information about the school

The On Track Education Centre (Wisbech) provides full time educational provision for up to 24 students aged between 11 and 17 years. It opened in January 2006 in former offices on a small industrial estate in Wisbech. There are currently nine students aged between 12 and 16 years. The majority of students have a statement of educational needs which reflects their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Some have attention deficit hyperactive disorder. The pupils have been permanently excluded from previous schools and pupil referral units or have had a long period of interrupted education. The centre sets out to provide individualised learning programmes which promote academic, work-related, vocational and social skills specifically tailored to students who have not achieved success in previous placements. It aims to help students to acquire skills which will help them live and work independently and constructively in the wider community. The centre had its first inspection in March 2007.

Evaluation of the school

The On Track Education Centre (Wisbech) provides a good quality of education and meets its aims fully. Since the last inspection, it has significantly improved its provision. It has broadened its curriculum, which is now outstanding, and developed systems to monitor the progress made by individual students in their attendance, behaviour and learning. Consequently, most students make good progress in their learning and at least good progress in their personal development. Good pastoral care and robust safeguarding arrangements promote good provision for students' welfare, health and safety. The school now meets all the regulations for independent schools and has successfully acted on all the recommendations made in the last report.

Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding. It is exemplary in its breadth, balance, flexibility of access and relevance to students' needs and interests. It has widened considerably since the last inspection and students now have a full day's programme that includes academic and vocational learning in the morning and outdoor education in the

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

afternoon. The breadth of the curriculum has expanded with the introduction of specialist provision for design and technology and vehicle maintenance, music, physical education at GCSE level and humanities at Entry Level. The curriculum is well balanced between academic and practical learning and planned carefully into bite-sized units that help students to absorb new knowledge and skills in a manageable way. There is a good emphasis on developing students' basic skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) alongside science, art, design and technology, humanities and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Key Stage 4 options include modern foreign languages, music, food technology, car mechanics, horticulture and other vocational subjects, as well as varied physical activities. The curriculum also offers unique flexibility of access through the complementary provision of an outreach programme and online learning. The centre-based teaching team works alongside an outreach team that provides one-to-one home tuition to students who are reluctant to attend school as a strategy to integrate them gradually to the centre. 'Liveschool', On Track's own on-line virtual school, gives students access to a further team of teachers and a personalised package of weekly tasks, activities, support and feedback.

The curriculum is planned in sufficient detail to support the teaching well. Students have individualised learning programmes that are tailored to their specific educational needs alongside individualised behaviour programmes that meet their emotional needs closely. These programmes fulfil the requirements of students' statements of educational needs. The curriculum is constantly reviewed to ensure its relevance to students. For example, students can now take a GCSE in environmental science which meets their needs better than the previously taught general science. Students are entered for a variety of externally accredited qualifications including Entry level and GCSE, which gives them access to further education or employment. In 2009, nearly all students secured a place at a local college.

Teaching and assessment are good. The key worker system is highly successful in providing students with a continuity of learning and care that is essential to enable them to experience success. The very close team work between the teacher and the key worker contributes significantly to re-engaging students in education. In one-to-one academic sessions, the adults jointly deploy an enormous amount of energy to deepen the student's understanding through complementary questioning that builds skilfully on the student's prior learning and attainment. They foster students' self-esteem and self-confidence effectively by praising their achievements and occasionally playing the role of an equal peer. Staff know students very well and understand which resources or contexts are likely to interest them and suit their learning styles. The teaching is underpinned by high expectations of work and behaviour and shows great flexibility to meet students' varying needs. Consequently, students feel very secure owing to clear boundaries and tailored support that can overcome emotional barriers to learning.

The centre has established systems to track students' progress rigorously. It has also planned opportunities to engage students in the assessment of their learning.

However, the quality of assessment varies from satisfactory to outstanding. 'Learning impact progress sheets' invite students to reflect on their learning but do not link sharply to examination criteria. Marking encourages students but does not always give them clear guidance on how to improve. In the best practice, students are guided to assess their performance thoroughly against specific success criteria and gain a clear understanding of the next steps to take to secure further improvement. As a result of this insight, their progress is accelerated in these subjects. Nevertheless, most students make good progress overall in their academic and vocational learning as a result of the good teaching and the outstanding curriculum that they experience.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall and students make at least good progress in their personal development. When asked what they like best about the centre, students say 'friendly staff and focused learning,' which is also noted by parents and carers. Students' enjoyment is reflected in their good attendance, behaviour and engagement with education and a direct result of the relentless commitment of a caring body of staff. The PSHE programme makes a strong contribution to developing students' sense of moral and social responsibility whilst familiarising them with British institutions. Students develop positive relationships with staff and peers who come from diverse cultural backgrounds and there have been no incidents of bullying or racism to-date.

Students have numerous opportunities to contribute to the life of the centre and beyond through vocational courses and mini enterprise schemes. For example, they have made garden furniture for the outdoor area. Recently, they took the initiative to parade in the market place of a local town wearing fancy dress to raise funds for the Children in Need charity. They designed posters to advertise the event and engaged well with the local population. They sell the produce from their design and technology and horticultural activities at local markets.

The centre prepares students extremely well for their future by fostering their self-confidence and self-esteem as well as equipping them with a broad range of basic and key skills supplemented by a practical programme of careers education. In addition, art, design and technology and car mechanics provide students with unique opportunities for self-discovery through creative work. Students are encouraged to nurture their talents and pursue them to a high level. For example, a Year 10 student showed impressive determination and invention when transforming a mobility scooter into a solar-powered buggy over a period of twelve months.

Outdoor education provides daily opportunities for group activities which promote students' cultural as well as social and physical development. Although students learn about diverse cultures in art and in humanities and sometimes visit museums, this aspect of the provision is weaker.

Welfare, health and safety of the students

The good provision for students' welfare, health and safety is underpinned by robust safeguarding procedures and good pastoral care. Since the last inspection, the centre has put in place a robust training programme that ensures all staff receive the appropriate level of training in child protection and other safeguarding areas. Staff have a consistent approach to behaviour management and the use of rewards and sanctions. Key workers fulfil an essential role as mentors and set weekly learning and behaviour targets for the students in their charge. Staff exercise vigilant supervision and demonstrate that they can respond rapidly and effectively to an emergency. Owing to close monitoring, students develop improving patterns of attendance and behaviour. All incidents are recorded and dated and indicate the sanctions incurred. Accidents are generally well recorded, but do not always indicate the specific action taken. Risk assessments are carried out for each student as well as for off-site visits and the premises. The centre has a satisfactory level of fire safety.

Through the PSHE programme and basic first aid training, students receive sex and drugs education and develop an awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe and healthy. Students are helped to stay fit through the daily provision of physical exercise including gymnastics, badminton, tennis, football, swimming, fishing and long walks along the coast. However, their participation in physical activities is variable and therefore limited for some.

The centre has prepared a plan that meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The proprietor ensures that safe recruitment procedures are followed rigorously and that all the required checks on staff are carried out prior to their employment and recorded centrally.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises have been developed since the last inspection to provide suitable outdoor space for recreation, relaxation, practical design and technology and car mechanics, and create additional indoor teaching space. The centre also regularly uses a local leisure centre, a swimming pool and a library.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The centre provides parents, carers, students and local authorities with good information about its work and about students' progress. Since the last inspection, it has produced a leaflet that clarifies the role of care staff who support students

attending the centre so that they can promote the young people's education in their care placements.

Procedures for handling complaints

The complaints procedures meet all requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

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

- share the best practice in assessment so that students gain a clear understanding of the steps they must take to improve and, therefore, make as much progress as they can across all subjects and courses
- further improve the provision for students' cultural development, especially in its multicultural dimension
- ensure that the records of accidents consistently indicate the action taken
- increase students' participation in physical activities.

Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

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

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of students		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of students

The overall welfare, health and safety of students		✓		
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School details

Name of school	On Track Education Centre (Wisbech)		
DCSF number	873/6041		
Unique reference number	133570		
Type of school	Special day school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	January 2006		
Age range of students	11-17 years		
Gender of students	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 5	Girls: 4	Total: 9
Number of students with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 5	Girls: 0	Total: 5
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 1	Girls: 1	Total: 2
Annual fees	£22,080		
Address of school	Enterprise House Old Field Lane Wisbech Cambridgeshire PE13 2RJ		
Telephone number	01945 580898		
Fax number	01945 580898		
Email address	Wisbech@ontrackededucationservices.co.uk		
Centre coordinator	Mrs Sharon Claydon		
Proprietor	On Track Education Services Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Mrs Michèle Messaoudi		
Dates of inspection	10-11 December 2009		