

# Radical Education

Independent school inspection report

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Unique Reference Number (URN)	132112
Inspection number	344449
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Reporting inspector	Nigel Cromey-Hawke

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A<sup>1</sup> of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005<sup>2</sup>, 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

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 students, aged fourteen to sixteen years, who usually stay between two months and two years. At the time of inspection, four students were on roll, one having joined the previous day.

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

The school's aims are to create an environment where all students are able to access a child-centred education and therapeutic services which enable them to re-engage with their learning. The school was last inspected in 2007.

## Evaluation of the school

Radical Education provides a good quality of education for its students. It meets its aims and has improved significantly since the last inspection when it was judged to be satisfactory with a considerable number of regulations not being met. Safeguarding and child protection arrangements are fully in place and rigorously reviewed, and the welfare, health and safety provision is good. The quality of the curriculum is good, and supported by good teaching, so that the majority of students make good progress, often in a short period. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is satisfactory, with students' appreciation of and tolerance towards cultural difference being underdeveloped. During their time at the school, students have insufficient contact with young people outside of the school community. All regulations for registration are now met.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

## Quality of education

The quality of education is good. The good curriculum has been revised since the last inspection and now features an extended compulsory core that ensures students each receive their entitlement. This is largely based upon the National Curriculum but is supported by vocational and nationally accredited courses. Scottish qualifications are increasingly being pursued, reflecting changes in the school's intake. The curriculum is highly personalised to meet the needs of students and focuses upon making up lost ground and building confidence in learning. There is a strong focus upon improving key skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). Much use is made initially of the short Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) units. Students gather many of these awards quickly as part of their re-engagement programme, helping boost their confidence in learning, before moving on to more challenging GCSE work. This means that if they leave before completing a course, as many do, they will have made secure gains.

The school provides specialist teaching in science, art and technology which students say they particularly enjoy. Extensive use is also made of the school's farm and workshop unit, to which students travel for half-day blocks with their carers. Here they pursue a wide range of accredited courses in vocational subjects, with trained instructors, as well as an ASDAN Experience of Work award. This helps them to recognise the value of learning and better enables them to enter the world of work with recognised qualifications. Work experience, careers work and links with the Connexions service are planned well and help students to think carefully about their future. The curriculum is very well supported by an extensive range of outdoor learning opportunities. These activities are enthusiastically taken up by students and help promote their well-being and personal development. The good personal, social and health education programme is valued by students, who all leave, for example, with email addresses, personal statements for employers and work experience records.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good and has improved since the last inspection when it was satisfactory. In the best lessons, such as a productive mathematics session, good progress was made because of the good pace and challenge, appropriate and varied activities and firm but friendly behaviour management. Dice-rolling provided data for frequency charting and resulted in extended working of examples that stretched learning well. Students demonstrate real pride in their achievements. Resources, including ICT, are used well although some classrooms lack vibrancy with little student work on display. Teachers' use of praise and recognition of effort, supported by the carers who sit-in on lessons when necessary, help ensure a positive learning environment. The impact of this is seen in the rapid re-engagement with learning and the progress made since entry by most students. In some cases, where the quality of teaching is satisfactory, expectations

are lower and students' engagement is not secured, with the result that progress slows.

Students are assessed carefully upon admission to the school, as there is often very little evidence of previous attainment. This information is used well to inform teaching. Detailed individual education plans help shape teaching and have clear targets for both attainment and behaviour. These are reviewed regularly with the students, headteacher and carers and provide a good framework for success. Teachers record students' engagement and attitudes to learning on a daily basis, contributing to the extensive and good quality monthly reports sent to parents and carers.

The good curriculum and teaching ensure that progress made by the majority of students is good and in some cases very good. Most students are on track to meet the challenging targets the school has negotiated with them. These involve multiple entries for Scottish Access and English Entry Level GCSE examinations. However, when student's attendance is poor, progress slows considerably. The school can evidence many cases where it has made a significant difference to the lives of the young people in its care. This is because the students are coached through the therapy sessions and motivated through their experiences in the school into gaining knowledge, skills and understanding at a good rate across many subjects, often for the first time in their educational experience.

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

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is satisfactory. The school works hard to promote students' personal development. However, the impact of what it does is not always apparent because of the complex barriers to learning that students face, many of which are out of the school's control. Those who stay for longer periods in the school show greater benefits than short-term placements. Most students say they enjoy school and recognise what it is trying to do for them, although their attitudes to learning are not always positive. Attendance for the majority is satisfactory and improves the longer they stay at the school, but the overall figure can be affected by the poor attendance of a very small minority. Behaviour for the majority is satisfactory and sometimes good. There are incidents of challenging behaviour but these are managed well and disruption to learning is minimised. Students have a clear understanding of right and wrong and take responsibility for their actions, but sometimes only after a crisis. Most recognise they must not transgress the law, as represented by their youth offending team contracts. A basic knowledge of public institutions and services is developed. Students demonstrate a satisfactory consideration for others and a growing contribution to the school. Students' contacts with other young people is underdeveloped and this limits their social skills. They have a satisfactory spiritual understanding, helped by the therapy sessions. Their understanding of other cultures is included in the curriculum but their appreciation of and tolerance towards diversity is underdeveloped. An appreciation of art and drama begins to develop the longer they stay in school and is

satisfactory overall. Students' overall improvement in skills and attitudes prepares them satisfactorily for their future lives.

## Welfare, health and safety of the students

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of students has improved since the last inspection when it was satisfactory. It is now good overall and makes a positive contribution to the lives of the young people in its care. There are good arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of students, especially when involved in the farm, workshop and outdoor activities. Child protection requirements are met. There is a very friendly and caring ethos that ensures that students feel safe and valued, although they do not always recognise this. A high priority is given to the emotional and physical health of students, with art, equine, land-based and massage therapies available for all from which they benefit enormously. The school works well with students' carers who all expressed support for every aspect of its work in the questionnaire returns. The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school maintains a single central record of recruitment and vetting checks on all staff. All safeguarding practices are quality assured by the parent company and training requirements are met.

## School's premises and accommodation

The main school accommodation provides for effective and safe learning. It is in a large terraced house with several classrooms, including specialist facilities for science, art and cookery. The decoration of most rooms is rather tired. Toilet facilities that did not meet regulations at the last inspection have now been provided. There is a small external recreation area to the rear. The farm and workshop, some 10 miles away is a good facility. Physical activities take place off-site using the local environment, sports centre or through the outdoor pursuits programme.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

There are well established lines of communication with the students, their families, carers and local authority placement officers to ensure that any information relating to education and care is shared quickly. One student has devised the school's children's guide which clearly explains its aims and expectations. Monthly education progress reports are provided for parents and carers, with interim contacts as necessary. The parent company's website and school prospectus are helpful and make all required information available to interested parties.

## Procedures for handling complaints

Complaints procedures meet requirements fully. There have been no complaints received in the last year.

## 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.

- Further promote students' awareness of and tolerance towards cultural difference so that they are better prepared to enter the diverse modern world.
- Increase students' contacts with other young people outside of the school community to support their personal development.
- Monitor the impact of teaching more effectively to better inform planning for improvements in learning.

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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The quality of boarding provision

Evaluation of boarding provision				
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## School details

Name of school	Radical Education		
DCSF number	909/6050		
Unique reference number (URN)	132112		
Type of school	Special day school for students with BESD		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 2003		
Age range of students	14-16		
Gender of students	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 3	Girls: 1	Total: 4
Number on roll (part-time students)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day students)	£29,260		
Telephone number	01228 631770		
Fax number	01228 894024		
Email address	education@radicalservices.org.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Jim Danson		
Proprietor	Mr S Roberts		
Reporting inspector	Nigel Cromey-Hawke		
Dates of inspection	2-3 February 2010		