

North West London Independent Special School

Independent special school inspection report

DCSF registration number	304/6082
Unique Reference Number (URN)	135794
Inspection number	345548
Inspection dates	17-18 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Greg Sorrell

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A¹ of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², 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

North West London Independent Special School provides education for up to 20 students aged between 11 and 16 years, all of whom have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. All students have experienced disruption to their education and several have not received any formal education for significant periods prior to admission. There are currently 11 students on roll, all of whom are boys. All have a statement of special educational needs and one is a looked after student. Their places are funded by the four local authorities that place students there. The premises are located on a trading estate in north west London. The education is provided in a two-storey building and there are additional administrative offices adjacent to the school. The proprietor, TC Education Services, has two similar schools in the south east of England. This school opened in September 2008 and this is the school's first inspection. The school's aims may be summarised as 'to educate, inspire and support students by removing barriers to learning so that they may develop a lasting enjoyment of learning, positive behaviour and achieve their maximum social and academic potential.'

Evaluation of the school

The North West London Independent Special School has made a successful start and meets its aims effectively. It provides a good quality of education for its students who make good progress because the quality of the curriculum and teaching and assessment is good. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their behaviour are good. The provision for the welfare, health and safety of students is good; safeguarding arrangements are thorough and meet requirements. The school meets all of the regulations for independent school registration.

Quality of education

The quality of education is good. The curriculum is good and meets the needs of the students, including those identified on their statement of special educational needs. In the mornings there is a strong academic focus, when timetabled lessons include the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and information and

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

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

communication technology (ICT). Other subjects include art and personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE). Afternoons largely consist of creative and physical activities. Accreditation is offered where appropriate in all subjects in addition to unit awards in English, art and design, drama, physical education and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) modules. Where students experience acute difficulties in re-engaging with education, flexible programmes offer a phased return to full time education, including work-related learning in the community. These off-site programmes are provided by the school's outreach team and are closely monitored by school staff, who receive regular progress reports. Appropriate attention is given to the students' emotional and physical well-being. For example, regular opportunities are provided for students to receive therapeutic massage and sessions related to staying safe through sex and relationships education. Where appropriate, expertise is drawn from external agencies that promote healthy lifestyles. The school works very closely with the Connexions service to prepare the students for the next stage of their education. The curriculum is enhanced through a range of visits to the local community, such as sports centres, galleries and public institutions. Regular visitors to the school include members of the drug advisory service and the police as part of the school's curriculum. There are currently no extra-curricular activities.

Teaching and assessment are good. The students are taught in age related groups in small classes. There is a high ratio of staff to students. Good quality lesson plans are informed by recent guidance to develop the students' learning skills through clear learning objectives. Most lessons are characterised by good relationships and firm expectations of work and behaviour. Occasionally, teachers overuse closed questions which reduce the students' opportunity to expand on their answers and clarify their understanding. Sometimes, students find it difficult to maintain their concentration and consequently become distracted and disengage with learning. The staff response is effective and, as a result of good working relationships between teachers and other staff, disruption to learning is minimised. Teachers have good specialist knowledge of the areas they teach and seek to provide relevant topics to develop students' key skills. For example, the use of ICT and on-line film clips to develop and extend persuasive writing for film trailers. Good use is also made of the work of students' peers to illustrate standards that can be achieved at the school, for example, in surrealist artwork. Throughout the school, explicit attention is given to the levels at which students are working and what is required for improvement. One student commented, 'I like to know what I have to do and want to show teachers what I can do.' The marking of students' work is thorough and contains relevant guidance. Students frequently ask what levels they are attaining and this assists them to make good progress in relation to their assessed levels on joining the school, which are typically lower than average. Some students make outstanding progress, for example, in English where three years of progress were made in the course of one year. However, most students demonstrate a noticeable reluctance to write and the school has correctly identified the need for additional literacy teaching with an increased emphasis in all subjects. At the end of the last academic year all leavers took up employment or further education.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is good. The school offers a calm and welcoming environment that is appreciated by students, as is shown by the vast majority who attend on a regular basis. Attendance is satisfactory. This is a significant improvement compared to their previous settings. Staff go to great lengths to encourage attendance and the students' self-belief that they can achieve, for example, the issue of 'quick notes' that recognise good work and attitudes. These achievements are celebrated in regular group meetings and also in school-wide displays. Although there is a highly appropriate focus on personal development, students also respond well to feedback about their academic achievements. This twin approach assists the students' economic well-being and prepares them well for life after school.

The students' behaviour is good. Staff offer good role models and enjoy the trust of students, who know they have someone to talk to if they have any worries. Occasionally, some students experience difficulties managing their own behaviour. At these times, the staff work well as a team to re-engage the students so that respectful relationships are maintained. The students develop an increased understanding of their impact upon others, for example, reflecting upon their own actions and acknowledging consequences. They willingly take up responsibilities around the school that enable them to make a positive contribution, for example, assisting with meal arrangements and membership of the school council. Beyond the school, fundraising for charities is firmly embedded as part of its wider social contribution.

Through an imaginative 'treasure hunt' the students gain a good knowledge of public institutions whereby they are required to locate and photograph relevant sites in London. Other experiences have included visits to the Old Bailey, the Houses of Parliament and the BBC. Students gain an understanding of cultural differences through the cultural diversity of the students and staff. Furthermore, PSHCE lessons on stereotyping and anti-racism ensure racial harmony is evident in the school.

Welfare, health and safety of the students

The school makes good provision for the welfare, health and safety of the students and it is a safe place in which to work and learn. The school's policies related to anti-bullying, the health and safety of students on educational visits, behaviour and safeguarding take full account of the latest guidance. All policies are rigorously implemented and relate directly to the school's practice. All staff are trained to appropriate levels in child protection as approved by the local safeguarding board. Initial risk assessments of students' behaviour are supplemented by behaviour management training, guidance and regular reviews in a range of contexts, for example, on-site and whilst on visits. The students also benefit from school staff who

have expertise related to the youth justice service, with whom most students are involved. Staff training, which includes appropriate induction programmes, is given a high priority by the proprietor who ensures that all staff undertake 20 days training annually. The proprietor has also ensured a smooth transition for the new headteacher by providing support from experienced staff in the group's schools. This has included meticulous tracking of academic progress, attendance and behaviour. Staff are vigilant about safety, including the requirements for fire safety, as evidenced by fire warden training and systemic equipment checks and evacuation drills.

The students are encouraged to live healthy life styles through the provision of healthy food and regular exercise, although they do not routinely wear suitable games kit as staff do for the latter. The PSHCE curriculum also addresses issues of personal safety, including drugs, sex and relationship education. A member of staff remains available to students and families for advice and support outside the school's term dates. Arrangements for first aid are thorough and all incidents and accidents are duly recorded. Attendance and admission registers are kept according to the regulations. The school fulfils its duties with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has rigorous recruitment procedures to ensure the suitability of all adults to work with the students. A single central register is maintained as required as a comprehensive record of all such checks.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are suitable for safe and effective learning. There are sufficient teaching areas for the number of students on roll. Most rooms have a designated subject specialism and have highly appropriate displays of students' work and academic guidance that motivate and inform students. A room on the ground floor serves as an art room, dining area and common room. The premises are well maintained, clean and attractively decorated. There are suitable facilities for students who become unwell during the day. The students have regular, supervised access to a nearby park for breaks and local leisure centre facilities for team games and physical education.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides parents, carers and others with the required information through its prospectus, website, regular telephone calls and newsletters that ensure all parties are kept up to date with accurate information. Few pre-inspection questionnaires were returned; however, those that were received indicated positive

views about the school. Information about students' progress is shared at regular intervals with parents, carers and placing authorities.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a set of procedures which fully meet the regulations. One formal complaint was lodged last year which reached a satisfactory resolution.

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:

- improve the range and quality of students' written work across the curriculum
- offer the students a programme of extra-curricular activities whereby they can express a choice of activities
- encourage the students to wear suitable clothing during games lessons.

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 *(leave blank if not applicable)*

Evaluation of boarding provision				
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School details

Name of school	North West London Independent Special School		
DCSF number	304/6082		
Unique reference number (URN)	135794		
Type of school	Special school for students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 2008		
Age range of students	11–16 years		
Gender of students	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 11	Girls: 0	Total: 11
Number on roll (part-time students)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of students with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 11	Girls: 0	Total: 11
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Annual fees (day students)	£48,000		
Address of school	Pivot House Cobbold Road London NW10 9SF		
Telephone number	020 8459 4806		
Fax number	020 8459 5622		
Email address	grace.kennedy@tces.org.uk		
Headteacher	Grace Kennedy		
Proprietor	Thomas Keaney - TC Education Services		
Reporting inspector	Greg Sorrell		
Dates of inspection	17–18 March 2010		