

# On Track Education Centre

Independent school inspection report

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|-------------------------------|----------------|
| DCSF registration number      | 878/6060       |
| Unique Reference Number (URN) | 131715         |
| Inspection number             | 348784         |
| Inspection dates              | 12–13 May 2010 |
| Reporting inspector           | Jonathan Palk  |

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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

On Track Education Centre, which occupies a unit on an industrial estate in Totnes, is a small, mixed, day special school which provides education for young people aged 11 to 18 who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. All students have experienced difficulties in their previous school settings. Currently, there are 28 students attending, aged between 13 and 17 years, of whom three are post-16, with 16 attending full time and 12 attending part time. All students have a statement of special educational needs. The main aims are for young people to: experience positive achievement and success; acquire diverse skills and knowledge; and to develop a positive desire to learn. The school provides individual programmes which seek to build on students' particular interests and knowledge. The school is in the ownership of On Track Education Services Ltd, a not-for-profit company. The company owns five similar establishments in other parts of the country. Students have their places funded by their local authorities or care providers and generally come from homes in the south of England. The school opened in November 2005 and was last inspected in September 2007.

## Evaluation of the school

On Track Training Centre provides a good quality of education and meets its aims. Good teaching and the good quality of care help students to make good progress overall. The quality of relationships and the personal, social and moral education combine well with a good curriculum. The school has demonstrated good improvement since the last inspection and has a clear view of its strengths and areas for further development. It now meets all but one of the regulations; those relating to safeguarding arrangements are met.

## Quality of education

The good curriculum is well tailored to meet the needs of each student. It is particularly effective in engaging those disaffected with learning through its strong

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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)

emphasis on flexible, personal learning plans. The curriculum now meets the requirements specified in students' statements of special educational needs; for example, with access to the full National Curriculum, speech and language therapy assessment, and the implementation of vocational learning programmes. In accordance with its aims, the school prepares individual programmes for students supported by Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) units of work.

The curriculum is mostly well organised and mapped to ensure that wherever possible students can access Level 2 courses and enables them to gain GCSE at grades A\* to C in core subjects. Other subjects are provided for and are based on entry level qualifications and unit awards. These ensure a good range of vocational courses are available and provide a good quality route into post-16 education. Curriculum planning does not always show how chosen topics and the work for units are tackling the gaps in students' literacy and numeracy skills. There are now good opportunities for studying the practical aspects of science and good opportunities for design and technology. The flexibility of the curriculum is very appropriate for students aged between 14 and 16 years who are unlikely to return to a mainstream school and provides an appropriate focus on self-motivation and providing skills to live and work independently and constructively in the wider community. The school has a good programme of personal, social, moral and health education (PSMHE) which is tailored to meet students' special educational needs.

The curriculum is extended well by visits to local estates where students study horticulture and engage in outdoor pursuits. Students generally attend the school for either morning or afternoon sessions and, in addition, most visit a local sports centre for physical education. The length of the taught week varies for each student, and some receive, by negotiation with their placing authority, less supervised education than the minimum expected. There is an online programme of learning, Live School, providing a successful alternative for those on a reduced curriculum. A programme of outreach teaching is provided by the education centre, and was inspected on this inspection and found to meet the requirements of students' amended statements.

Teaching and assessment are good. Teachers forge highly effective relationships with students. They are skilful at managing behaviour that might otherwise disrupt learning. They are particularly good at drawing students into productive discussions that encourage them to learn from each other. Good use is made of specialist expertise such as in cookery, forest schools and in core subjects. Practical examples in lessons are rooted in real life experiences such as shopping or Do It Yourself. Most staff have substantial experience of working with young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities associated with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. They are building up expertise in understanding the complexities of those with Asperger syndrome. The role of learning support assistants is clear, and their work in lessons with individual students helps to keep them on task. In general, however, opportunities are still being missed at the end of the lesson to review what has been learnt, to assess progress and to explain the next steps.

A rigorous system for tracking progress and monitoring attainment and personal development across the wide range of award schemes has been embedded since the last inspection. There is a satisfactory mechanism for assessing students' basic skills on entry, but this does not identify sufficiently the particular gaps in skills experienced by students. This remains a priority for the assessment profiles.

Resources to support the teaching of history, geography and religious education are now satisfactory and benefit from a careful selection of topics relevant to the students.

Students overall make good progress. Progress in personal development is good for the vast majority and all are successful in re-engaging with learning post-16. Their progress towards full independence and managing change are secure. Academic progress is more mixed as a range of factors influence individual students such as medical and behavioural needs as well as their personal situations and attendance. The school is working well to address these complex needs. However, recent results show that all students achieve AQA units in several subjects and most gain two or three GCSE or entry level passes. Some students gain strands of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme.

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

The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school makes good provision for students' personal development. Students' self-esteem is raised when they receive rewards and certificates in recognition of their achievements. Opportunities to participate in outdoor pursuits help to develop their self-confidence and their ability to work cooperatively. Staff provide appropriate role models for students and treat them with respect. As a result, students report that they enjoy coming to school. Attendance is satisfactory for most students but remains inadequate for a minority.

Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Students generally respond well to the support given by teaching assistants and teachers. Students follow instructions well and are generally polite and courteous, and are pleased to talk to visitors about their work. Those with autistic spectrum disorder learn to control their responses when invited to join in group activities. Students enjoy the rewards they receive for good behaviour. Records show that behaviour is good in most lessons, although the students themselves feel there is too much low-level disruption by a minority.

In PSMHE lessons students are encouraged to understand the basis of responsible relationships and to make wise choices when faced with dilemmas. This work is supported by a visiting youth worker and health worker. Some students gain knowledge of different cultures through the optional study of religious education or by studying literature. There is now a programme that helps all students to gain an understanding of their own and other cultures. This includes a programme to introduce different religious and cultural festivals. Opportunities for quiet reflection

are too rare despite the increased space. Students make a positive contribution to the wider community through charity fund-raising, fetes and market days. Students' views are routinely considered through a suggestions box, or via their key worker or peers.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are fully in place. There are a comprehensive range of risk assessments. Staff adopt a calm and non-confrontational approach to promoting acceptable behaviour. Good behaviour is encouraged by the awarding of points which students exchange for vouchers to spend at local shops. The PSMHE curriculum has a suitable focus on drugs education and encouraging students to lead healthy lifestyles. Some students smoke outside the building at break time but smoking does not occur on the premises and, occasionally, students are successful in giving up tobacco.

Each student is assigned a key worker, who provides good support to students through speedy recognition of concerns. Staff meet each morning to share relevant information and discuss any strategies that may be needed for particular students. Appropriate arrangements for safeguarding students are in place and staff have received the required training in child protection. Fire drills are held regularly and electrical and fire safety equipment is checked. All staff are trained in first aid; and procedures for administering first aid and dealing with minor injuries have been strengthened and fully meet requirements.

The school has a plan showing how the accommodation might be further modified to meet the needs of disabled users which meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Criminal Records Bureau and other required checks are undertaken taken and staff have been trained in safer recruitment. The school maintains all the required information on a single central register.

## School's premises and accommodation

Since the last inspection, the school has acquired two adjacent steel-framed industrial units that have been appropriately adapted to provide additional classrooms and workshops for design and technology and vocational courses in vehicle maintenance. There is still a lack of an appropriate outside area for recreational activities. The school compensates for this by making good use of facilities in the nearby leisure centre and a local horticultural and forest school. The school has a spacious feel that particularly benefits those students who are

intimidated by small spaces. Rooms are in good decorative order and the school is clean and tidy and impressively free of graffiti.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Through its prospectus and other documents, the school now provides all of the required information for parents, carers and others. Termly reports give parents and carers good information on students' attendance, behaviour and academic progress. A wide range of formal and informal opportunities for the local authority, parents and carers to be involved in supporting the young people are sustained through the dedicated team of managers. The small number of parents, carers and placing authorities who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaires expressed positive views about the work of the school.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a suitable policy for handling complaints effectively. Parents, carers and others are informed in the school prospectus that they can receive a copy of the policy on 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 those listed below.<sup>3</sup>

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- make appropriate arrangements for providing an outside space for students to play safely (paragraph 5(t)).

## 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 quality of plenary sessions at the end of lessons so that students are reminded about their learning and the progress towards their personal goals.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.htm](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.htm)

- Continue to develop assessment systems in order to identify more accurately the shortcomings in students' literacy and numeracy skills so these can be incorporated into their personal learning plans.
- Strengthen topic and unit plans by providing clearer links to the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills.



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  | On Track Education Centre                                  |          |           |
| DCSF number   | 878/6060   |          |           |
| Unique reference number (URN)                                 | 131715   |          |           |
| Type of school  | Independent Special School                                 |          |           |
| Status  | Independent  |          |           |
| Date school opened  | 1 November 2005  |          |           |
| Age range of pupils   | 11–18  |          |           |
| Gender of pupils  | Mixed  |          |           |
| Number on roll (full-time pupils)                             | Boys: 13   | Girls: 3 | Total: 16 |
| Number on roll (part-time pupils)                             | Boys: 8  | Girls: 4 | Total: 12 |
| Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need | Boys: 21   | Girls: 7 | Total: 28 |
| Annual fees (day pupils)                                      | £20,640  |          |           |
| Address of school   | Unit 8 Paragon Buildings<br>Ford Road<br>Totnes<br>TQ9 5LQ |          |           |
| Telephone number  | 01803 866462   |          |           |
| Fax number  | 01803 866462   |          |           |
| Email address   | jcox@ontrackededucation.com                                |          |           |
| Headteacher/Centre Co-ordinator                               | Mrs Jane Cox   |          |           |
| Proprietor  | On Track Education Services Ltd                            |          |           |
| Reporting inspector   | Mr Jonathan Palk HMI                                       |          |           |
| Dates of inspection   | 12–13 May 2010   |          |           |