

Continuum School

Independent school progress monitoring inspection report

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Reporting inspector	David Rzeznik

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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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 by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005.^{1,2,}

The inspection was conducted at the request of the Registration Authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan following the previous inspection.

Information about the school

The Continuum School is a small, independent special school in Northampton. It opened in 2000 and was purchased in 2005 by the Continuum group which provides education and care, in schools and children's homes, for those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school is registered for up to 24 students aged between 11 and 16 years. There are currently five students on roll. Four have a statement of special educational needs and three are looked after. Most students have challenging behaviour and a history of poor attendance. A new headteacher was appointed in December 2010. At the time of the last inspection he was the school's deputy headteacher. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2011.

The school aims to 'provide a well ordered, positive and supportive environment where each student has the opportunity to flourish, succeed and develop into a mature, independent citizen, equipped to take their rightful place as a positive member of the community.'

Context of the inspection

The school's last full inspection was in October 2010 when it was judged to provide an inadequate quality of education and did not meet its aims. This was because the curriculum and the provision for welfare, health and safety and for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development were inadequate. As a result, students made inadequate academic progress despite the quality of teaching being satisfactory. A significant number of regulations were not met. The school submitted an action plan to the Department for Education (DfE) in March 2011 but it was judged inadequate.

In July 2011, there was a monitoring inspection to evaluate the progress the school had made in implementing its action plan. The inspection judged that satisfactory progress had been made and that the school met all except three of the regulatory requirements for independent schools. The three unmet regulations related to weaknesses in the school's staff vetting procedures. The DfE did not ask the school

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

to produce an action plan following the first monitoring inspection but did instruct it to rectify all regulatory failures.

The purpose of this second monitoring visit was two-fold. Firstly, to evaluate the progress made in rectifying the three regulatory failures identified in July 2011. Secondly, the school applied to the DfE for a material change to alter their age range from 11 to 16 years to 11 to 18 years as from September 2011. This inspection checked staffing, curriculum policies, schemes of work, lesson plans and resources to ensure that an appropriate education will be provided when the school admits students above compulsory school age. There are no post-16 students currently on roll and the proprietor does not intend to admit any until the outcome of the material change application is known.

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

The school has made good progress in rectifying the three safeguarding regulatory failures identified at the time of the first monitoring inspection in July 2011. It now meets all regulatory requirements for independent schools.

In July 2011, the effectiveness of the school's safer recruitment procedures was evaluated and weaknesses were found in staff vetting arrangements. At the time of the monitoring inspection, all staff and others who came into contact with children had undergone a Criminal Records Bureau check at an enhanced level. Two staff that had the right to work in the United Kingdom (UK), but had lived outside the UK, had not undergone further overseas checks to establish their suitability to work with children as required. The single central record did not contain all of the required information regarding overseas checks. As the school's recruitment procedures were insufficiently robust, the requirements to safeguard pupils' welfare were unmet.

The school's central administration department planned to review the recruitment process and to undertake all the required checks. As a result of implementing the plan, the school has improved its recruitment procedures and they are now satisfactory. Suitable further checks have been carried out on those staff who have lived outside the UK to confirm their suitability to work with children. The outcomes of these checks are recorded in the school's single central register as required. All safeguarding regulations are met.

The school has applied to the DfE to extend the age range up to 18 years as from September 2011. While all regulatory requirements are met for the current provision and no students have been admitted of post-compulsory school age, the school does not have in place an appropriate curriculum, schemes of work, lesson planning or resources for those post-16. The change is not therefore recommended.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school has made good progress and now meets all regulatory requirements.

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties		
Date school opened	April 1999		
Age range of pupils	11-16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 4	Girls: 1	Total: 5
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 4	Girls: 0	Total: 4
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 2	Girls: 1	Total: 3
Annual fees (day pupils)	£10,608 per term		
Address of school	67a Queens Park Parade Northampton NN2 6LR		
Telephone number	01604 719711		
Email address	les.haines@continuumgroup.org.uk		
Headteacher	Les Haines		
Proprietor	Bob Hall		