

School URN 135426

Independent special school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Honoree Gordon HMI
Social care inspector	Michelle Bacon

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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, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

An inspection of the care provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the national minimum standards for children's homes. This inspection took place at the same time but the full report is published separately on Ofsted's website and should be read in conjunction with this report which covers the educational registration of the school.

Information about the school

This is an independent special school which is also registered as a children's home. It provides education and care for students aged from 10 to 18 years of age who are in the care of a local authority and who have behavioural, emotional, and social difficulties. There are currently no students who have a statement of special educational needs. The school opened in October 2007 and is registered to provide education for one student at a time. This is usually delivered on site, but partly or wholly also through students attending a local mainstream school, as is judged appropriate to their needs. There is one student currently on roll, aged 15, who attends part-time at a local mainstream school.

The school is one of a number of similar schools across the country owned and run by the Continuum Care and Education group. The group's vision statement says that the aim is: 'to promote excellence, quality and high achievement for all by unconditional positive regard for everyone'. The group aims to facilitate reintegration into mainstream education, wherever possible.

The education provision was last inspected in 2008. The care provision was last inspected in April 2011.

Evaluation of the school

The school provides a good quality of education. The curriculum, teaching and assessment, and the provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are all good. The school meets all the regulations for independent schools and has made a good improvement since its previous inspection. The quality of provision for students' welfare, health and safety, including the procedures to safeguard them, are outstanding. The school meets its stated aims well: through

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

personalised programmes of education and outstanding care it successfully removes barriers to students' learning so that they make good progress.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good and it meets the needs of students well, allowing them to make good progress in their learning. The curriculum is highly flexible so that it can be personalised to meet the needs of each student. This high degree of personalisation is a significant strength of the curriculum. The school draws effectively on partners, such as a local mainstream secondary school with a technology specialism and local colleges of further education, to provide a good choice of GCSE and vocational courses. Further options are available through other units in the Continuum Group. This arrangement affords the possibility of easy transfer to the most suitable provision for individual students, as their needs change.

The curriculum is closely based on the National Curriculum in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and is suitably adapted for each student after an initial assessment of their needs and aptitudes. The curriculum harnesses the students' interests and seeks to fill in any gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding, especially in relation to their basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Linking up with the work of the staff in the residential unit, the curriculum aims to foster better attitudes to learning, where these have been an issue in the past.

Current Key Stage 4 options include GCSE courses in English, mathematics, science, history, physical education (PE) and art. Previous students have also followed vocational courses, for example, in construction, and hair and beauty. The curriculum provides very good opportunities for students to develop their skills in literacy and numeracy. There is an appropriate range of accreditation for learning, to suit each student, including GCSE, entry level certification, units of accreditation of the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) and also the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) for life skills. These courses and qualifications, together with a programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) provide students with a good preparation for later life. Work experience is organised for students where appropriate. Students have access to careers advice through the local mainstream school. The programmes for PSHE, citizenship and religious education cover a wide range of topics relevant to young peoples' lives, although the units of work are sometimes not taught on a very regular basis. The school recognises this issue and the need to make more effective links with the residential unit and mainstream school placement and is taking action to tackle it.

Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved since the previous inspection. There is a computer with internet access in the classroom so that students can access easily resources, including in the evening, to help them to complete homework tasks. ICT is used well by teachers to engage students and add variety to lessons. However, at the time of the current inspection, students were no longer receiving specific lessons in ICT which limits the opportunity for them to gain

accreditation for their efforts. Although students follow a self-taught ICT course online, the limited provision acts as a brake on development of students' ICT skills. The curriculum for PE provides up to three hours each week of sport or exercise, using a local sports centre. This makes a satisfactory contribution towards students keeping fit. However, the provision for PE and sport is mostly restricted to games and activities undertaken one-to-one with an adult, such as badminton, with few opportunities for engaging in team sports or developing team-working skills. Appropriate schemes of work are in place for all subjects, with opportunities for regular assessment built in. The science syllabus includes practical and investigative science and elements that help students learn about the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Creative skills are developed adequately through art lessons.

Teaching and assessment are good. Teachers' planning files are very well organised, with examples of assessed pieces of students' work and suggestions for students as to how to improve further. Teachers are almost invariably specialists in their subjects. They encourage students well and are skilled in managing behaviour, so that they keep students on task. They use a good range of methods and resources to promote learning, adding relevant or topical themes to lessons so as to enhance interest.

Assessment procedures are more effective than at the time of the previous inspection when the school had not kept sufficient assessment data to show the extent of students' progress. The school's records show that students are making good progress from their starting points. Links between mainstream schools and this school usually operate effectively to support students' learning and to minimise any duplication of work, although there is some duplication of effort to develop students' knowledge, skills and understanding.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good overall. Students' moral development is good and is at the heart of what the school offers. Staff build up students' self-confidence and trust so that good working relationships are created and students adopt positive attitudes to their learning. Students grow in their understanding of right and wrong. This creates a calm and pleasant learning environment and students' behaviour is satisfactory. A system of positive rewards successfully encourages appropriate behaviour.

Links between the residential unit and the school are highly effective in building students' confidence and in reinforcing learning. Students and staff take part in activities which contribute to helping others, such as raising funds for charitable causes through the 'Race for Life'.

The very small size of the school means that there are few opportunities for team or group activities with students' peers to further promote their social development. Nevertheless, students' social skills are fostered through the placements in mainstream schools where they can work alongside their peers, and through regular

recreational activities in the evening, such as attending a youth centre. Students' engagement in lessons sometimes varies depending on the location and is often better within the school than on placements. The company's flexible policies allow placements to be reviewed when required.

The school organises a suitable range of extra-curricular visits to complement the curriculum. These include trips to Chester Zoo, to places of worship and to local places of interest so that students can learn about their local town and council. In these ways, students' cultural development, their awareness of citizenship issues and their understanding and tolerance of others are fostered.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school's provision for promoting the welfare, health and safety of the students is outstanding. The school consistently 'goes the extra mile' to help safeguard the most vulnerable young people, working highly effectively with other agencies and professionals in the process. Staff have a very good understanding of issues related to child protection and are pro-active in supporting the students. All the required policies and procedures, including those for child protection, are in place. Record-keeping, including for the assessment of risks and the prevention of fire is exemplary. Policies for the administration of first aid and for the management of behaviour are very thorough. As a result, the school is successful in removing barriers to learning, enabling students to feel very safe and to achieve well.

The online learning and development platform for staff is a strong feature of the provision which enables staff to gain accreditation for their learning, share good practice and seek advice on a wide range of topics related to education and care. This creates a highly professional approach to the school's work.

Students have a satisfactory awareness of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. Staff seek to enhance this through encouraging regular exercise and good eating habits. The school meets its requirements under the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school conducts all the checks that are currently required on the staff, including a check with the criminal records bureau. It keeps a record of these checks in a single central register as required. Staff recruitment practice and record keeping are robust.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The premises are suitable and provide a safe environment for learning. Accommodation is light, bright and well maintained. There is one classroom, with an ICT resource and internet access, but there are no specialist subject facilities on site. There is access through mainstream schools and through the company's other

provision to more specialised resources, as required. The outside area is small but adequate.

Provision of information

The school provides all the information for parents, carers and others that it is required to do. Regular reports are written giving details of students' progress.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The policies and procedures for the handling of complaints meet requirements.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The care provision was judged to be outstanding and national minimum standards were met. A full report on the care provision is available on Ofsted's website and should be viewed in conjunction with this report.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets all The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

National minimum standards

Please see the report on Ofsted's website relating to the care provision in the children's home which should be read in conjunction with this report.

What the school could do to improve further

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

- review the PSHE, religious education and citizenship programmes to ensure that these are delivered on a more regular basis and draw more effectively on links with the residential unit and mainstream school placements
- provide further opportunities for students to enhance their skills in ICT and to gain accreditation for their efforts.

Inspection judgements

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 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	√			
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Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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Overall effectiveness of the residential experience

Overall effectiveness of the residential experience	✓			
Outcomes for residential pupils	✓			
Quality of residential provision and care	✓			
Residential pupils' safety	✓			
Leadership and management of the residential provision	✓			

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special school for students with behavioural, emotional, or social difficulties		
Date school opened	October 2007		
Age range of pupils	10-18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Number of boarders	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total:0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total:1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£34,800		
Annual fees (boarders)	£205,400		
Email address	Angela.norris-heyesh@greencorns.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Angela Norris-Heyes		
Proprietor	Continuum Group		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



14 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of School URN 135426

I am writing to thank you for your help when I came with my colleague to inspect your school recently and to tell you about our findings.

- The quality of education you receive is good: the curriculum, teaching and assessment are all good.
- You are making good progress in your learning.
- Your behaviour is satisfactory.
- Your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- The provision for your welfare, health and safety is outstanding. The school has very strong systems to help keep you safe and keeps all its records very carefully. The staff stress the importance of you trying to lead a healthy lifestyle. We think they give you good advice on this and we would encourage you to follow it.

The overall effectiveness of the residential provision is outstanding and there is a separate report about it.

Your school meets all the regulations for independent schools and has made good progress since its previous inspection in 2008. However, I have suggested a few things to make the school even better:

- ensure that the PSHE, religious education and citizenship programmes are delivered on a more regular basis and link up better with the residential unit and the mainstream schools
- provide further opportunities for you to develop your skills in ICT so that you can gain additional qualifications in this subject.

Yours sincerely

Honoree Gordon
Her Majesty's Inspector