

Future First Independent School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Jane Melbourne HMI

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
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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}

Information about the school

Future First is an independent school for students aged 14 to 16 years. The school was initially set up in 2004 as part of the charitable outreach of the Birmingham Community Venture (BCV) project. It was formally registered with the Department for Education (DfE) in 2007 to provide education and support for 12 students who have been excluded from, or who refused to attend, mainstream education. It has extended its provision to include education for students who are new to England and speak English as an additional language. It has applied to the DfE for an increase in numbers as there are currently a total of 40 students on roll. The outcome of the application is not yet known. There are a very small number with a statement of special educational needs. The school aims to provide a positive learning environment and ensure a suitable destination is secured for each student at the end of Year 11. The school was last inspected by Ofsted in December 2008.

Evaluation of the school

Future First provides a good standard of education and care for all students and meets its aims effectively. It is highly successful in improving students' attendance; punctuality and conduct, including their behaviour and aptitude for learning. It supports individuals well in the basic skills of verbal and written English. The school has a particular strength in developing students' moral and social development and ensuring that they achieve as well as they can. Whilst the school is in breach of the requirements of its registration, there are no concerns for the welfare and nature of the accommodation and facilities for the current students. Safeguarding arrangements are thorough. All regulatory requirements are met. The quality of education has been maintained since the last inspection.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. It rightly prioritises personal development and the acquisition of core skills of literacy and numeracy for those students who have previously had poor experiences of education. Provision successfully prepares students for further learning or for working life. The curriculum prioritises functional skills in English language and numeracy supplemented by citizenship; religious education, physical education and information and communication technology for those with a weaker

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

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

command of English. The school effectively tailors its programmes based on students' most pressing needs and in relation to the National Curriculum; the Open College Network; Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network and Virtual Learning Academy learning materials. Schemes of work exist for all subjects and are appropriate. A considerable strength of the provision is the way it re-engages and motivates students to learn effectively. The self-development programme and outbound education activities are particularly good at boosting students' self-esteem and self-confidence. They provide plenty of opportunities for teamwork, problem-solving, safe risk-taking and effective communication. The self-development programme contributes significantly to improving students' attendance, punctuality and conduct, including their behaviour and attitudes to learning. Opportunities for physical education include use of the gymnasium equipment and table tennis on site; football and Thai boxing, orienteering and other adventure sports on the outbound education programme, which are all popular with the students. The provision helps students keep fit and healthy. Opportunities for scientific investigation and enquiry and for developing students' creative talents are adequate but are underdeveloped. Occasionally students' take examinations, such as GCSEs, and formal assessments which are unsuitable for their stage of study.

The school has close relationships with external partners including the local Special Educational Needs Advisory Service, the Youth Offending Team and the Connexions Service, who in turn have close relationships with the students. An appropriate programme of careers education is provided that is matched to students' needs and aspirations. There are two full time family link workers and a range of volunteers who come into school regularly to support tutors in the classroom. This means that students are given a good deal of individual and personally tailored support. The vast majority of students move into further education, employment or training having completed their Year 11 at the school.

Teaching and assessment are good and all students, make good progress both academically and in their personal development. The most effective lessons are those where activities are well planned to suit the full range of students' needs, including those who prefer a more active style of learning and for those who learn and complete their work quickly. Students undergo an initial assessment of their basic skills to identify any particular barriers to learning and their strengths and weaknesses in learning. The rigorous initial assessment and induction process means that tutors know students well. They therefore make lessons interesting and use assessment information effectively to ensure work is pitched at the right level. Staff always ensure that they share the learning objective; students know what must be achieved. Work is thoroughly marked and learning is regularly assessed so that students know their strengths and what must be improved. Achievement is regularly recorded, but staff are not yet consistently working out academic progress as precisely as student's progress in their personal development. There are positive relationships between the students, enabling them to work in pairs or small groups successfully. The excellent rapport they have with staff means they usually show respect to them and respond well to high expectations set. On a small number of occasions, tutors have not sufficiently prepared for the lessons or ensured that the content is pitched appropriately to students' levels of understanding. Also very

occasionally, some of the initial activities take too long and prevent the main learning from taking place, thus reducing the amount of written work completed.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Over time, all students make significant progress in their attendance and punctuality, which is facilitated by the school's own 'Wizz Kids' positive recognition scheme. Clear expectations from staff; the close liaison with students' families and the good levels of individual support ensure that students' individual needs are met and barriers to learning are reduced. Students now want to attend regularly and understand the benefits of making an effort and taking personal responsibility for their learning and behaviour. The school is highly successful in developing students' self-knowledge, confidence and esteem. Those students who are referred from other agencies progress well in their conduct, including their aptitude to learning and behaviour. All of the referring agencies which have placed students with the school comment positively about improvements in students' behaviour and their good progress. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and well managed. There are a reducing number of complaints, incidents and accidents at the school. Students' knowledge of public institutions and services is acquired effectively through the curriculum. For example, in citizenship there are visits into the local and wider community to experience court rooms or places of worship. Students learning English spend a morning each week familiarising themselves with the services of the library. Tolerance and harmony is a strong feature of the school and is promoted well. The school ethos is based on equalities and respecting amongst peers and for adults. Both sets of students mix well and differences are respected.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good. The school effectively safeguards and promotes the welfare of all of its students, particularly the most vulnerable. The school's commitment to this is shown in its employment of two staff as family link workers. These staff take particular responsibility for supporting students' attendance and punctuality and they liaise closely with students' parents and carers. There are effective systems for following up non-attendance and poor punctuality and rewards are given for significant improvements in this area. Students respond well to these initiatives. There is a clearly understood behaviour code which staff, students, parents and carers all sign. Students say they feel safe in school because staff genuinely care about them and they report that they are not bullied. They confirm: 'This place is like our second home. We are all friends here.' Equipment is checked regularly for its safety and there are satisfactory levels of fire safety including regular emergency evacuation practices.

The school has rigorous procedures for recruiting staff and a comprehensive induction programme to ensure their smooth transition into school life. Checks on staff and volunteers with regard to employment history, character and professional references are thorough. Training is up to date in safe recruitment and child protection, with named members of staff as designated officers who are

appropriately knowledgeable of the action to take when there is a concern. There are extremely close links with the referring bodies and with external support partners who are concerned with the welfare of the students. Policies and procedures for minimising risk to students on the premises and off the school site are comprehensive. Staff are vigilant and are positive role models for the students; they promote the school ethos well. Students genuinely care about their school and each other. Staff supervise students well. They meet and greet students and accompany them off the premises and safely onto public transport at the end of the school day. Suitable records are kept for accidents and incidents and both are reducing significantly. Admissions and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with current regulations. The school adequately fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school complies with the regulations in respect of the checks it makes on the proprietor and prospective employees with regard to their identity and suitability to work with children. The single central register is well maintained and contains all of the required information.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school has sole use of a single storey building owned by Birmingham local authority. It has suitable teaching areas but a lack of specialist teaching facilities for science and the arts. There is a hard court area for physical education although this doubles up as a car park. There is adequate outdoor space for play and recreation. The local authority allows the school sole access to a playing field adjacent to the school site. The premises and accommodation are secure and are suitable for the number of students on roll without compromising their safety.

Provision of information

The school provides, or makes available, all of the required information to parents and others. Information is clear, accurate and up-to-date. The school has established close links with parents and carers; the students' funders and a wide range of external partners. It also has good links with the students' previous schools and other providers. Parents and carers are kept well informed about their children's academic and personal progress through comprehensive twice yearly reports, parents meetings, regular telephone contact and, where necessary, home visits. Staff know the students' families well.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has recently updated its complaints procedure, which is clear and meets requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').³

What the school could do to improve further

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

- ensure that the end of year assessments for students are included into school data and that staff use interim assessments to accurately quantify each student's individual termly academic progress
- ensure that staff prepare thoroughly for all lessons and plan activities that promote maximum learning, utilising students' own ideas and lines of enquiry as much as possible, and engage the full range of learners' needs
- further develop the curriculum to provide more scientific enquiry and opportunities for students' aesthetic and creative development. Ensure that schemes of work continue to meet all students' needs and that they are carefully entered for examinations where they are well prepared and destined for success.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made.

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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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Emotional, Behaviour Disorder Centre and school for students with English as a second language		
Date school opened	2004		
Age range of pupils	14–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 33	Girls: 7	Total: 40
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 2	Girls: 0	Total: 2
Annual fees (day pupils)	£169.23 per week		
Address of school	Hockley Port All Saints Street Hockley Birmingham B18 7RL		
Telephone number	0121 551 4837		
Email address	futurefirstschool@ymail.com		
Headteacher	Muhammed Majid		
Proprietor	Barket Hussain		

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.

12 January 2012

Dear Students



Inspection of Future First Independent School, Birmingham, B18 7RL

Firstly, may I congratulate you all on being such strong ambassadors for the school during my inspection visit. I felt very privileged to hear about your successes since coming to Future First and that you can see the improvement in your attendance, punctuality and conduct as well as in your academic skills. It was pleasing to hear of your enthusiasm for certain subjects and your love of physical and outbound education. For those of you who have joined the school to better master your English language, I am heartened by your rapid progress.

I believe this is a good school with a dedicated staff team who really care about you all as individuals. Your tutors and support staff try and make your lessons enjoyable and ensure that you are well equipped for the next stage of your education or for working life. The school meets all government requirements. It is keen to continue improving and so I have recommended that the proprietor and staff:

- Consistently update the assessment records of your academic achievements and use this information more effectively to be sure of your progress
- Always plan activities which interest you and make sure students of all abilities can participate and are fully engaged
- Ensure that the curriculum continues to meet students' ongoing needs and that there are more opportunities for scientific enquiry and to study the arts. I have also suggested that entry for examinations is considered carefully and only when students are adequately prepared and confident.

Well done to all of you and I hope you continue to attend well, work hard and have every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Jane Melbourne
Her Majesty's Inspector