

# Further Heights – Green Corns

Independent school inspection report

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DCSF registration number	354/6026
Unique reference number	131446
URN for registered childcare and social care	SC025523
Inspection number	344436
Inspection dates	26-27 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Nigel Cromey-Hawke
Social care inspector	Stephen Trainor

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended. The inspection of boarding was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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**Age group:** 11-18

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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.

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

Further Heights – Green Corns is a single occupancy, special school and children's home. It caters exclusively for looked after children aged from 11 to 18 years who have a history of unsuccessful placements in local authority homes and/or in fostering. The proprietors are Green Corns Ltd, part of the Continuum Education Group. The school was opened in 2004 and operates from a detached bungalow in a residential area. The school provides 24 hour care and boarding for students who have statements of special educational needs for reasons of severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. At the last inspection in 2007 the quality of education and care was judged to be inadequate. Most students stay for between three to six months. Students are taught by a team of visiting teachers who cover 17 such schools in the area operated by the proprietors. The school's aim is to provide, 'excellence, equality and high achievement for all, by unconditional positive regard for everyone'. The previous social care inspection was in 2009.

## Evaluation of the school

Further Heights school meets its aims and has improved significantly since the last inspection. It now provides a good overall quality of education. The overall effectiveness of the boarding provision is good. Safeguarding arrangements are fully in place and rigorously reviewed and the welfare, health and safety provision is good. The quality of the curriculum is good, although work-related learning opportunities are not always taken up by students. Good teaching ensures that students make good progress, often in a short period. The monitoring of teaching does not focus sufficiently upon learning outcomes. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its students is satisfactory. Some students are reluctant to engage with some of their subjects. All regulations for education and care are now met.

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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)

## Quality of education

The overall quality of education is good. The curriculum has been completely updated since the last inspection. It has a good breadth of learning activities, largely based upon the National Curriculum but supported by vocational and nationally accredited courses. It is adapted well to meet the immediate needs of students and focuses upon recovering lost ground and building confidence in learning. It makes good use of Entry Level courses to get students started on accredited pathways so that if they leave before completing a full course, as many do, they will often have made secure gains. This helps them to recognise the value of learning and better enable them to enter the world of work with recognised qualifications.

There is a strong focus upon improving key skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). There is an accredited 'Preparation for Working Life' programme that supports students' future economic well-being, and a good personal, social and health education programme. The school offers several vocational courses, although these do not always meet fully student's needs and aspirations. The 24 hour curriculum is well supported by carers and teachers through visits and activities, with some students' liking for cookery being supported by their contributions to planning and preparing house meals. The local fitness centre is used extensively, with golf, squash and badminton sessions being enjoyed by students, as well as museum visits that link well with curriculum areas.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good and has improved considerably since the last inspection when it was unsatisfactory. The teachers are briefed well by the care staff on students' daily needs and they incorporate this information well into their planning. The school's self-evaluation indicates that the majority of teaching is good with a small amount that is satisfactory. Inspection evidence agrees with this but, although monitoring of teaching is extensive, there is insufficient focus upon improving the quality of learning outcomes. As a result planning to improve learning is not as fully informed as it could be. In the best lessons, such as a very productive mathematics session, good progress was made because of the good pace and challenge, appropriate and varied activities and firm but friendly behaviour management. Complex pattern-making, using geometrical shapes, was completed successfully. Students demonstrate a real pride in their achievements. Resources are used well to engage students' interests, including the use of ICT. Teachers' use of praise and recognition of effort, through merit cards, ensure a largely positive learning environment, the impact of which is seen in the rapid re-engagement with learning and progress made since entry by most students. In some cases, where the quality of teaching is satisfactory, expectations are lower and students' engagement is not secured, with the result that progress slows.

Students are carefully assessed upon admission to the school as there is often very little evidence of previous attainment. This information is used well to inform teaching. Teachers record students' engagement and attitudes to learning daily,

providing a valuable record of their personal development. This information contributes to the good monthly reports sent to carers.

The good curriculum and teaching ensure that progress made by students is good overall. The school can evidence where it has made a significant difference to the lives of the young people in its care. This is because many of the students are coached and motivated into gaining knowledge, skills and understanding at a good rate across many subjects, often for the first time in their educational experience. Current relatively weaker areas are personal, social and health education, and citizenship. However, given their starting points this constitutes good progress overall. Students are supported well by the care staff, who work closely with education staff, often sitting in on lessons and helping with any homework or independent learning that is set.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students**

The school's provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The deterioration in personal development noted at the last inspection has, however, been turned around. The level of absconding has decreased significantly. The school works hard to promote students' personal development. However, the impact of what they do is not always fully apparent because of the complex needs of the students, the often short time spent in the school and students' reactions at times to what the school provides. Care staff and teachers work effectively together. Attendance is satisfactory and tracking data shows that engagement in lessons increases over time. However, on days which feature the least favourite subjects, delaying tactics are used sometimes to avoid starting lessons. The school has few strategies to manage this and, as a result, valuable learning time is lost. Students' attitudes to learning are not always positive, although the school accurately judges behaviour to be satisfactory.

In both discussion and through questionnaires, students show they enjoy their learning. However there is also negativity at times that even good teaching and relationships struggle to overcome. The promotion of future economic well-being is a priority for the school, with a clear focus upon life-skills within the curriculum. Meeting students' needs in using external providers is not always successful due to students' attitudes. Students are given some responsibilities to take part in the organisation of the school, through participation in planning meetings and completing domestic chores. Self-sufficiency is promoted as far as possible through the use of daily 'Independence Time' away from the school. These opportunities are used responsibly by some students. Students' understanding and tolerance of the cultural diversity of the modern world is promoted well through the curriculum, but the impact of this upon some students' attitudes is only satisfactory. Understanding of the difference between right and wrong is demonstrated well in discussion between students and adults and there is good coverage of the workings of public institutions and services. Students' co-operation with and respect for others is less well-developed.

## **Welfare, health and safety of the students**

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of students has also improved over the last three years and is now good in all areas. All regulations are met. There are good arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of students and all those on the school site. Equipment is regularly checked and appropriate risk assessments are in place. Child protection requirements are fully met. There is a very friendly and caring ethos that ensures that students feel safe and valued. The school gives a high priority to promoting an understanding and practice of healthy living. There are clear links through the curriculum and practical activities incorporated into areas such as science, for example, with the use of exercise to demonstrate through a heart monitor the impact upon health. Opportunities for physical exercise are taken up well. Visits and contributions by visitors, to support students' emotional well-being, do much to counter the potential isolation of a single placement school. The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

## **Suitability of the proprietor and staff**

The school keeps a single central record of recruitment and vetting checks on all staff that is well maintained and up-to-date. All safeguarding practices are rigorously quality assured by the parent company. All essential practices are well-known and followed.

## **School's premises and accommodation**

The school premises contribute well to the homely atmosphere, and safe and effective learning. Since the last inspection a small, but fit-for-purpose, classroom has been created. It is light and airy, features displays of students' work and achievements and has computer facilities. There is a good-sized garden for physical recreation, supplemented by the use of the local sports centre to support the health and well-being of students.

## **Provision of information for parents, carers and others**

There are well-established channels of communication with the students, their families and local authority placement officers to ensure that any information relating to education and care is shared quickly. Discussion with students shows that the 'children's guide' provided by the school about rights and responsibilities is understood. Monthly education progress reports are made, with interim contacts as necessary. The company's website and prospectus are helpful and make all required information available to interested parties.

## **Procedures for handling complaints**

These meet requirements fully. There have been no complaints received in the last year.

## **Effectiveness of the boarding provision**

The care provision was judged to be good, and national minimum standards are 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 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.

- Further personalise the curriculum to provide sufficient challenge as the students' learning needs develop, especially in meeting their aspirations for work related learning.
- Identify areas of learning to which students have resistance and develop strategies to overcome their reluctance to engage with these, especially at the start of the day.
- Further develop the good monitoring of teaching to identify more clearly the outcomes of lessons and so better inform planning to improve learning.

## 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		✓		

### Pupils' 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

Evaluation of boarding provision		✓		
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## School details

<b>Name of school</b>	Further Heights – Green Corns		
<b>DCSF number</b>	354/6026		
<b>Unique reference number</b>	131446		
<b>Type of school</b>	Independent special		
<b>Status</b>	Independent		
<b>Date school opened</b>	2004		
<b>Age range of students</b>	11-18		
<b>Gender of students</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time students)</b>	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
<b>Number of boarders</b>	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
<b>Number of students with a statement of special educational need</b>	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
<b>Number of students who are looked after</b>	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	£257,400		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01706 644471		
<b>Fax number</b>	01706 644599		
<b>Email address</b>	angela.norris-heyas@greencorns.co.uk		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Angela Norris-Heyes		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Green Corns - Continuum Group		
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Nigel Cromey-Hawke		
<b>Dates of inspection</b>	26-27 January 2010		