

# School 135354

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Terry McKenzie

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Piccadilly Gate  
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Manchester  
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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.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## Information about the school

This is a small special school and children's home that provides education and care for up to two boys or girls aged from 10 to 18 years. The school can provide for students with a statement of special educational needs. Currently, there is one student on roll, who does not have a statement of special educational needs. Students who attend the school have special educational needs relating to behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Most have experienced considerable disruption to their schooling in the past. All are boarders and are cared for by the local authorities that place them here. The school was first registered as an independent special school on 3 August 2007 and last inspected by Ofsted in November 2008. The most recent inspection of the care provision occurred in January 2012.

The aim of the school is to provide students with a rich and varied learning environment that allows them to develop their skills and abilities to their full potential. In cooperation with the care team, it intends to establish a culture that promotes excellence, equality and high achievement for all by having unconditional positive regard for everyone. Students are taught by visiting teachers who also work in rotation with the other schools nearby that are owned by the company.

## Evaluation of the school

The school provides a good quality of education and complies with all of the regulations for an independent school. It largely meets its aims and has improved since the previous inspection. The good curriculum and good quality teaching are successful in encouraging students to attend lessons, take part in learning and to gain qualifications; consequently, students make good progress in their lessons. Well-managed support from the staff helps students to demonstrate good behaviour and to make good gains in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and the provision for students' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

## Quality of education

The curriculum is good and is tailored to meet the needs of each learner. Older students, particularly those who remain at the school for some time, follow courses which, lead to qualifications such as Entry Level Certificates and GCSE. Staff ensure that courses are wellmatched to the levels of ability and the interests of each student. Occasionally, where appropriate, students are encouraged to work towards gaining credits in the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) but students can also undertake courses in functional skills. In Key Stage 3 students follow a broad and balanced curriculum that reflects that of mainstream schools in content but which is modified and adjusted so that it is appropriate for them. Practical work is included in the curriculum and teachers bring practical resources to the school to be used in class. For example, in one lesson the teacher established a mobile workshop in the classroom so that students could learn how to design and make a rabbit hutch in wood. Work in personal, social and health education (PSHE) overlaps with that done by the care team through the 'waking day' curriculum where the emphasis is on helping students to help themselves. Teachers pay attention to the development of literacy and numeracy in all subjects. However, the school has not ensured that all the peripatetic teachers employ a common methodology to the development of literacy skills so that students are provided with a consistent approach. Physical education takes place away from the school site. In the past older students have undertaken work and vocational placements in the community.

Teaching and assessment are good; students make good progress in most lessons. Teachers plan thoroughly and always have the needs and interests of students in mind. Consequently, activities are interesting and the pace is well matched to the students' abilities. Teachers are often with students for the whole of a morning or afternoon but they break up these sessions skilfully with a variety of activities and different teaching methods such as formal teaching, individual activities, research and the use of computers to enhance students' work. Lessons are planned in detail so there is usually plenty for students to do. Learning support is provided, when required, by the care team and during the inspection teachers directed the work of the care staff very carefully to ensure their effectiveness in the classroom. Work is marked and stored safely and respectfully so that it forms a comprehensive record of students' achievements.

Initial assessments for attainment, spelling and reading are undertaken when students enter the school so that staff can gauge their level of skills and ability. These tests are revisited regularly to measure a student's progress. The results are compared with ongoing teacher assessments to provide a more accurate understanding of achievement. The records of progress are suitable for demonstrating generally the value that is added to the education of individual students. All students are set targets for their personal and educational development. However, it is not always obvious how much progress students are making on a lesson-by-lesson basis because teachers do not usually record the very small steps of achievement demonstrated by students. School records and the observation of

lessons indicate that, from low starting points, students' overall progress is good even though their levels of attainment remain lower than that of most others of the same age in mainstream schools. Students come to enjoy their learning and to appreciate the efforts of the education staff. For some, these are their first successes in any form of education.

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

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. They begin to enjoy their time at school and to appreciate the guidance and support of the adults with whom they work. Their self-esteem grows so that they become sufficiently confident to contribute to their own learning and become more active in lessons. Many have previously demonstrated very low levels of school attendance but upon joining the school the attendance of most improves quickly and is sustained at a level close to the national averages. Students become motivated to attend more promptly in the mornings so that much less schooling is missed. This motivation was evident during an English lesson when the class were closely attentive to the story of *Romeo and Juliet* and engaged in sensible discussion with the teacher. Students report that, through working with education and care staff, they are encouraged to use their initiative and become more self-reliant. Relationships are positive and students learn to trust the adults. Consequently, their social skills develop well and this is evidenced by their polite and welcoming attitude to visitors. In the home and school they start to feel part of a community, albeit a small one. Students' behaviour becomes less challenging so that it is mainly good during lessons and throughout the school day. Serious behavioural incidents are rare and are quickly managed by staff.

The 'waking day' curriculum provides opportunities for students to undertake outings to places of cultural interest such as museums. There is a planned programme of visits to places of worship of a number of different religions that is coordinated well between the home and school. Where appropriate, feast days are recognised and celebrated through the preparation of special meals and enrichments to the general work of the school. The human and social aspects of students' courses extend this first-hand experience and provide opportunities for them to learn about people in other countries, cultures and religions. Students come into contact with a large number of adults because of the rotation of the peripatetic teachers. The education and care staff come from a wide variety of cultures and communities and share their heritages with the students. An emphasis is placed by staff on respecting others whatever their backgrounds and on having unconditional regard for everyone, as is stated in the aims of the organisation. Thus, by small degrees, students become more tolerant and respectful of others. Links with the community are forged through the education that takes place off the site and, for older students, by having work experience placements and vocational education in places of work. The citizenship curriculum that is designed for each key stage ensures all students learn about the public institutions and services of England.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

The arrangements for welfare, health and safety are satisfactory overall although the school cares well for students on a day-to-day basis. Staff are competent and committed and arrangements for safeguarding are appropriate and well-established. However, although all required documents are all in place and are at least satisfactory, the systems that ensure the regular review of policies are not always sufficiently robust. All staff are trained in child protection and training is updated regularly by all. A number of the more senior staff have undertaken training to the level of a designated person so that there is always someone available who is experienced in dealing with child protection matters. Managers work well with the local authority and other agencies in safeguarding matters and students know who to go to if they have any concerns. There is consistency in the management and supervision of students between the home and school and, consequently, students' behaviour improves to become good. Rewards and sanctions are used effectively and students are keen to comply and cooperate with the adults with whom they work.

Policies relating to health and safety are in place and implemented. All matters relating to fire protection are in order. Records are kept of the servicing of emergency equipment and of evacuations from the building. The school has produced a suitable policy statement and plan to increase accessibility in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

The school has thorough procedures for the safe recruitment of staff and others. All of the required checks on the suitability of the directors and staff have been appropriately undertaken. The single central register of these checks is complete and meets requirements.

## **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The school accommodation within the children's home is safe and appropriate for use. The building is situated at the end of a row of terraced houses on a busy street and is in satisfactory condition. It is spacious with a reasonably sized garden so that students can work and play outside in safety. The two classrooms are appropriately resourced and furnished with computers and printers readily available for staff and students to use. There are no specialist rooms but teachers bring in materials to enable practical work to be undertaken such as in design and technology and science. Physical education takes place in a nearby sports centre.

## **Provision of information**

The school brochure provides all the required information about the aims and organisation of the school for parents, carers and others. Reports are provided to parents and carers about the academic performance, progress and personal development of their children. In the event that a student has a statement of special

educational needs, suitable information for the annual review of the statement is prepared. An annual account of income received and expenditure incurred is provided to local authorities.

### **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The complaints policy meets all of the regulations.

### **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

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

- enable students to make faster gains in literacy through ensuring that all teachers follow a common approach to the teaching of reading and writing
- further develop the assessment framework to provide better records of the small steps of progress made by students during lessons
- ensure that company policies and documents are reviewed more regularly and in line with the latest government guidance.

## 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

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties		
<b>Date school opened</b>	August 2007		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	10-18		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£34,800		
<b>Address of school</b>	Leeds House 11a Yorkshire Street Rochdale OL16 1BH		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01706 644471		
<b>Email address</b>	Julie.barnes@continuumgroup.org		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Olufemi Onasanya		
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Continuum Group Ltd		

**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.**



22 March 2012

Dear students,

### **Inspection of School URN 135354**

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. I very much enjoyed meeting you and talking with you to find out about your education. I was particularly impressed with your welcoming attitude and good behaviour.

The school provides you with a good education because teaching is good and you make good progress in lesson. The teachers provide you with appropriate and interesting lessons. This provision makes you want to attend school regularly and so your attendance and punctuality improves. Those students who stay until the age of 16 gain useful qualifications. The school makes good efforts to prepare you for the future and to be more independent. You gain confidence through being more successful in education and this encourages you to try new things such as using tools to make the rabbit hutch. You are cared for by staff and they keep you safe.

The school meets all of the regulations but I have asked the managers to make certain changes that will make your education even better. The visiting teachers should all use the same methods for improving your literacy skills so that you can make even better progress in your reading and writing. Teachers should record your achievements in even smaller steps so that you can see how much progress you are making each lesson. The school should also review its important paperwork more regularly and keep it up to date with the latest government guidance.

Once again, thank you for your interest in the inspection. I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Terry McKenzie  
Lead Inspector