

# Cul Academy

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Susan Lewis

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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

Cul Academy opened in January 2012 and is located in Birmingham. The school accepts students who are disaffected with a history of disrupted schooling and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD).

It is owned by City United Limited, which also provides a range of alternative provision and courses for pupils and schools in the West Midlands. The school is registered for up to 15 boys and girls, aged between 14 and 16 years of age. At the time of this inspection there were 15 students on roll, two of whom were Year 9 students. The school has applied to the Department for Education to extend its registration to include Year 9 pupils.

Almost all students come from the City of Birmingham. Students come from a range of ethnic backgrounds although the majority are White British. One student has a statement of special educational needs and one student is looked after by the local authority. This is the school's first inspection.

The school's motto is 'engage, inspire, develop, support.' It aims to 'provide a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum that shows progress and continuity so that each child meets their full potential.'

## Evaluation of the school

The school successfully meets its aims and provides a good quality of education. Students' achievements, given their starting points are good. This is because the curriculum and teaching are good and the school promotes students' personal development well so that behaviour is satisfactory and improving. The school takes good care of students and students say they feel very well supported and safe. Provision for welfare, health and safety is satisfactory, rather than good, because although the school cares for students very well the management does not check sufficiently that all of its policies are being systematically followed. All but two regulations are met.

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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 quality of the curriculum is good. It is broad, relevant and all the required areas of learning are covered. It is supported by detailed schemes of work and has very strong elements such as the provision made for personal, social and health education and for English and mathematics.

Many students arrive at the school with low attainment in comparison to others of their age because of disrupted schooling. The school recognises students' potential and tries to find courses that will enable all to achieve. Students achieve well in basic skills such as literacy and numeracy because these subjects are consistently well taught and they have good opportunities to apply these core skills, for example in biology. The curriculum is enriched through visits and residential experiences and opportunities for enterprise such as through printing T-shirts. Good partnership working with placement authorities and other schools, and opportunities for work experience prepare students well for the next steps in their life and education.

Teaching and assessment are good and overall, students make good progress in their learning and personal development. Teachers and support staff generally work well together although there is sometimes no clear role for support staff in lessons. Teachers plan work carefully that will interest students and takes account of students' needs and capabilities. They explain well to students what they are learning and how the work relates to course requirements or their target levels. Students say that the school is helping them to be more ambitious for the future.

When teaching is good or better the work is challenging, practical and interesting and engages students' enthusiasm. It is well matched to students' levels and needs and the activities challenge them to work things out and do even better. Students have individual education plans but these tend to focus almost entirely on behaviour, rather than identify specific educational needs. However, teachers overcome this using their own knowledge and understanding of the students' needs.

Relationships are good between staff and students and between the students themselves. They say that they feel safe at the school and it is helping them to make good progress in their learning and their behaviour. Families are almost all pleased with the progress their children make, although a few wish they were given more information about their child's learning.

Regular assessment tracks students' progress on the courses they study and in their behaviour. These systems are currently being developed further to provide greater detail about students' achievement. In lessons, teachers make good use of questioning and feedback to check on students' learning and adjust the pace and challenge appropriately. In the best lessons teaching assistants or learning mentors join in the lessons and help to develop students' thinking further. Students are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and how it can be improved.

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

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance is low but improving significantly as students settle into the school. Students say they enjoy school more now and their parents agree. They have a keen sense of right and wrong and of fairness. Students work well in classes and in one to one sessions if they find managing their behaviour or staying in class hard. The strong personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), religious education and history modules and specialist classes such as anger management successfully underpin students' personal development. Students' behaviour is satisfactory and improving; as they settle in to the school and adjust to its rules, the number and severity of incidents reduce significantly. An atmosphere of mutual respect pervades the school. Students say that staff are firm but fair and it helps that the rules are clear.

Work in music, religious education, English and PSHCE promotes well students' understanding of different cultures. Residential opportunities, visits and sports activities and paired working in class help develop students' social skills. Through their citizenship programme students have good opportunities to learn about national institutions, visiting magistrates' courts, the Houses of Parliament and police stations.

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

Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. Although students' safety and well-being are given high priority, two of the regulations are not met.

Staff work well with placing authorities, with social services and other practitioners to ensure students' needs are met and that they are kept safe. The safeguarding policy provides clear guidance on how staff should deal with any child protection concerns and staff, including the designated person, are trained at the appropriate level. There is an appropriate number of first aiders, whose training is regularly updated.

Students, themselves, follow health and safety and first aid courses. Risk assessments are in place, including those for fire safety and for educational visits. Students are confident in the school's ability to keep them safe and show a good understanding of different forms of bullying and how to deal with these as a result of good teaching. They say bullying is rare and that everyone 'usually gets on very well'.

Pupils are well supervised at all times. Records of sanctions imposed upon pupils are kept and recorded, although they are not recorded in a common format or in sufficient detail in the sanctions book. The school does not keep its admission registers and attendance registers in line with guidance, although it does document students' admissions and attendance carefully elsewhere and checks up on them swiftly if they do not arrive at school. On one occasion, it did not follow safe recruitment guidance in ensuring it had the required written references before the member of staff started work, although the references were received soon afterwards and the school had prior spoken assurance as to the suitability of the candidate. Though these weaknesses do not reflect best practice, the school has in place alternative procedures which are adequate to ensure that students are not at

risk; for example, staff never start work without an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check and meticulous identity and qualification checks. This is why the judgement is satisfactory rather than inadequate.

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

All staff and the proprietors have been suitably vetted to confirm their suitability to work with pupils. Information contained in the single central register meets requirements.

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

The premises are of good quality and spacious for the number of students. They enable good learning outcomes to be achieved and students to be taught in groups and individually. Although the school does not have an outdoor play environment it has a good size common room and makes good use of a park and sports facilities immediately opposite the school. It has a good range of ICT facilities. There are no specialist rooms for science and this limits the science that can be taught to biology. There is a room dedicated to design technology and students' enterprise work in designing T-shirts. The school makes good use of local community facilities to enhance its facilities further such as specialist music and sports provision. Appropriate provision is made for those who become ill.

### **Provision of information**

All of the required information is provided, or made available, to parents, carers and others. Satisfactory annual reports are provided to parents and carers about their children's progress in all of the subjects taught. These are well supported by regular parents meetings and celebratory events. Appropriate reports are made to the local authority.

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

The complaints policy 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'), with the exception of those listed below.<sup>3</sup>

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

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<sup>3</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made).

- ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school which have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 7)
- maintain admissions and attendance registers in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 17).

## **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 staff record behaviour incidents in a uniform way, making clear the context of the incident and the actions taken following it, including the students' views.
- Improve individual education plans to include academic as well as behavioural targets.
- Improve the quality of support from teaching assistants, so that best use is made of them at all times.

## 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 for disaffected students and students with challenging behaviour.		
<b>Date school opened</b>	12 January 2012		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	14–16 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 10	Girls: 5	Total: 15
<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: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£9,000		
<b>Address of school</b>	Suite 7, Cuckoo Wharf, 435 Lichfield Road, Aston, Birmingham, B6 7SS		
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 3280547		
<b>Email address</b>	dawn.miller@cityunited.org		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Wayne Henry		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Dawn Miller		

**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.**

13 December 2012

Dear Students



### **Inspection of Cul Academy, Birmingham, B6 7SS**

I did enjoy visiting your school recently and talking with you and your teachers. Thank you to those of you who talked with me and also to everyone who shared their work with me. You told me that you think your school is a good school which is helping you to make better progress and is encouraging you to be more positive about your behaviour and learning. You like the smallness of the school and feel all the staff really care about you.

I agree that the school is helping you to learn and to manage your behaviour well. You are making good progress in the subjects that you study because the teaching is good and because teachers try hard to make the learning interesting. You have a good balance of more practical subjects and academic subjects to study. The sports activities and visits, for example to the Lighthouse and the residential trips you can go on add very well to the curriculum you study. It was good to see so many of you being challenged to work towards C grades or even better in your GCSE. All of this means the school is helping you to prepare well for what you do next in work or at college.

The school has some things it needs to do to improve further. These include:

- improving the ways it keeps the attendance and admissions registers so they make clear exactly who is on the roll of the school, how often they are attending and if their attendance is improving
- making sure no staff start work before all their required references have been received
- improving the support that you are given by teaching assistants.

Your attendance is improving significantly and I would like to see you maintain this.

Yours sincerely

Susan Lewis  
Lead inspector