

Advanced Education - Devon School

Oaklands Park, Buckfastleigh, Devon, TQ11 0BW

Inspection dates 6–7 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Adequate	3
Pupils' achievement	Adequate	3
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Adequate	3
Quality of teaching	Adequate	3
Quality of curriculum	Adequate	3
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Adequate	3
Leadership and management	Adequate	3

Summary of key findings

This school is adequate because

- Although students' achievement is adequate overall, some students do not get enough help with improving their reading and writing.
- While teachers have good subject knowledge, they do not always use information on students' level of attainment to plan lessons which give the right level of challenge to all students. Also, marking is not used consistently to help students improve their work.
- While staff form caring and supportive relationships with students, targets to improve students' behaviour do not focus sharply enough on specific areas for improvement.
- While the headteacher and senior leaders have formed a committed team which has good ideas for improving the school, some aspects of their work are not yet developed fully, for example the use of data to check how well the different groups of students are performing and the monitoring of teaching and learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Students feel welcome at school and their attendance is good, despite many having failed to engage in their previous schools.
- Staff at all levels work closely with parents and carers and provide them with good information about their child's progress.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with half a day's notice.
- The inspector observed six lessons taught by six different teachers, looked at students' work, and held discussions with the headteacher, staff, the proprietor's head of education and students.
- The inspector took account of the views of three parents and carers gained through telephone calls, and the views expressed by two staff in questionnaires returned during the inspection.
- The inspector looked at the school's documentation including teachers' planning, records of students' progress, monitoring reports of teaching and learning and procedures for keeping students safe.

Inspection team

Andrew Redpath, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Advanced Education – Devon is a small special school which provides education for boys and girls with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties. Most students have levels of reading and writing below that expected for their age and a small number have an autistic spectrum condition.
- The school was established in March 2009 on a different site. It came into the ownership of Advanced Childcare Limited in May 2012 and has occupied its current premises since September 2010.
- Currently, there are 17 students aged between 11 and 16 years, 14 of whom have a statement of special educational needs. About one third of students are in the care of their local authority and reside in the company's local children's homes.
- Alternative educational provision is used by a few students who attend part-time at local colleges to complete vocational courses.
- The headteacher is also responsible for another of the proprietor's schools approximately 50 miles away. The day-to-day management of Advanced Education – Devon is the responsibility of a school leader.
- The school aims to provide a stimulating curriculum which recognises students' individual achievements and builds their self-esteem. Its last full inspection was in February 2010 when it failed to meet two of the regulations. The school received a progress monitoring inspection in October 2010.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Establish a clear, consistent approach to teaching reading and writing in all subjects across the school.
- Ensure teachers use information on students' attainment to set work at the right level and use marking consistently to help students improve their work.
- Set clear, precise targets for students to improve their behaviour and check regularly how well students are achieving them.
- Use the information gathered on students' progress to check how well groups of students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and those with an autistic spectrum condition are performing to monitor the impact of the school's work on raising attainment.
- Strengthen leadership and management by developing the role of senior leaders in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Adequate

Given students' starting points their achievement is adequate overall. Achievement is not yet good because progress in English is not good enough and some students do not do well enough in GCSE examinations. Almost all students have failed to thrive in their previous schools and whilst attending Advanced Education – Devon they begin to develop more positive attitudes to learning. Achievement is best in science and art where some students gain higher grade GCSE passes. It is weakest in English, partly because approaches to the teaching reading and writing are not used consistently across the school. In mathematics, a few students make good progress, whilst others struggle to master basic numeracy skills. Students achieve success with different grades, in a range of GCSE, Entry Level and basic skills qualifications. A few older students would like the opportunity to study more subjects at GCSE level.

Some of those currently in Years 10 and 11 are attending local colleges to study for work-related qualifications. Students enjoy these courses and recognise how they are helping to prepare them for future careers. A few weaker students who receive individual help to improve their reading and writing are beginning to catch up with other students. Evidence suggests that students who are on part-time placements and receive some of their education at home are making adequate progress. Teachers test each student's level of attainment in English, mathematics and science when the student joins the school. This information is used subsequently to measure their progress. Senior leaders are not yet using the information to check how well pupils with different special educational needs are performing against national expectations, or to measure the impact of some of its work on students' learning. Available evidence suggests that all groups of students make similar progress.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Adequate

Students' behaviour is adequate. It is not good because the targets for improving the behaviour of some students are too broad and do not focus sharply enough on the aspect of behaviour most in need of change. This can occasionally result in incidents of low level disruption not been tackled decisively.

Many students have a history of exclusion from school. The caring and understanding approach shown by staff results in students wanting to come to school. As a result, attendance is good and above that for special schools nationally. Students generally settle in lessons, but sometimes they struggle to take part due to their anxiety about tackling something new and their fear of failure. Staff are skilful at reassuring students and encouraging them to engage.

Students get on well together most of the time with verbal banter and good humour. Conflicts do occur which can be unsettling for the rest of the group. They earn points at the end of each lesson for good work and behaviour which help to motivate them.

Managing and isolating inappropriate behaviour is made more difficult by the closeness of classrooms to the central area and the lack of a separate space for working individually or in smaller groups.

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is adequate. The outdoor education programme helps to develop students' confidence and self-esteem. An appropriate citizenship programme promotes knowledge of public institutions and services. Students gain an awareness of different religions and cultural traditions through the multicultural studies lessons. This awareness is deepened through trips and visits, for example to a local museum and when a few students visit another school to hear an account from a Holocaust survivor. The school has suitable plans to strengthen this area of its work and has planned future visits to a mosque and synagogue. Students have relatively few opportunities to contribute to the school and to the wider community. They have a book where they can record their suggestions, help to cook meals or help at a local animal sanctuary.

Quality of teaching**Adequate**

The quality of teaching varies and is adequate overall. It is not good because the strengths seen in some teaching are not seen elsewhere. Teachers have good subject knowledge and manage students' behaviour skilfully. The atmosphere in lessons is generally calm and learning proceeds at a reasonable pace. Students are taught in small classes which enables them to receive considerable individual support. In the best lessons practical activities are planned which capture students' interest. During the inspection this was seen in a science lesson when students conducted an experiment to test chemical reactions and in a mathematics lesson when students counted out sweets to understand fractions. The use of assessment information is not always used to plan lessons that give the right amount of challenge to all students. In some lessons progress is slower because work is too easy for some students and too hard for others. The use of marking to help students improve their work varies between subjects, partly because the school does not have an agreed marking policy. Suggestions for improvement are not always clear or followed up. Learning support assistants understand students' needs well and give support and encouragement to help them attempt work. They often take responsibility for areas of learning, for example teaching reading and aspects of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme.

Quality of curriculum**Adequate**

The quality of the curriculum is adequate. It is not yet good because, although all the required areas of learning are taught, students are offered a relatively narrow range of subjects at examination level. All students study basic numeracy, literacy, science and information and communication technology. Other subjects include history, multicultural studies and a course which promotes students' independence and social development. Students in Years 10 and 11 can choose from a small range of optional subjects, which includes history, food technology and art. Additional work-related courses are provided for some students at local colleges. Students receive a suitable amount of physical exercise through weekly visits to a nearby leisure centre and a programme of outdoor pursuits. The PSHE programme includes a suitable range of topics which promotes students' safety and encourages them to form positive relationships.

The school meets the curriculum and other needs of students as set out in their statements of special educational needs. The timetable is organised well, with lessons typically of 45 minutes, which help students to maintain concentration. Students also start the day with a relaxed breakfast club and a tutorial session which allows for any issues from the previous evening to be discussed. Planning for almost all subjects is complete. Plans are not yet in place to develop students' reading and writing skills in subjects across the school. Occasional trips enrich the curriculum, for example to a local castle and steam railway and to a residential centre in Wales.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety**Adequate**

The provision for students' welfare, health and safety is adequate. It has improved since the last inspection when it was judged inadequate and now meets all the independent school standards. It is not yet good because some policies need updating and further attention is needed to the implementation of the behaviour policy. Staff establish trusting relationships with students and deal sensitively with their personal difficulties. Policies and procedures to promote child protection, good behaviour and prevent bullying are reviewed regularly and understood by staff. The behaviour policy contains an appropriate focus on praising the positive aspects of students' behaviour and on involving them in discussing solutions to their difficulties.

In some cases, targets for improving behaviour stated in students' individual behaviour programmes do not always focus in sufficient detail on the aspect of behaviour needing to be changed. There is a small number of exclusions each term, used as a last resort, to help students reflect following an incident. The school covers the risks of cyber bullying through its PSHE programme, although its anti-bullying policy has not yet been updated to reflect this work. Students are properly supervised.

Suitable arrangements are in place to safeguard students. Staff have received recent training at the appropriate level in child protection. The newly-appointed designated person with responsibility for health and safety in the school is soon to receive training. The proprietor's induction package ensures new staff are made aware of the school's procedures to keep students safe. Risk assessments are thorough. Fire drills are held regularly and fire-fighting equipment and alarms are checked as required by a specialist company. Risk assessments for activities and off-site visits, combined with a good level of staffing, ensure the safety of students. Health and safety policies and procedures cover all aspects of the school's work, although the health and safety policy is rather general and has not been adapted to the specific requirements of the school. There is a suitable policy for the administration of first aid and several staff have received training in first aid. Students are supported to lead a healthy lifestyle through taking part in physical education and cookery, and topics in the PSHE curriculum. Sex and relationships education is taught separately for boys and girls, with support from a healthcare worker.

The school has thorough procedures for the safe recruitment of staff. All the required checks on the suitability of the proprietor and staff have been completed effectively. All checks are recorded appropriately in a single central record.

Leadership and management

Adequate

The quality of leadership and management is adequate. It is not yet good because some key staff are new to their posts and they have not had time to have an impact on raising the quality of teaching and learning. For example, the school leader and the English coordinator have joined the school quite recently and they are still developing their roles.

The school leader and other senior leaders are aware of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Teaching is monitored regularly by the headteacher and the proprietor's head of education. Suitable plans have been drawn up to improve the school's work, for example aspects of the curriculum, the teaching of reading and writing and the use of data to check students' progress more effectively. Staff receive appropriate training, for example in behaviour management and in the education of students with special educational needs, which is often organised by the proprietor. Some of these actions have already had a positive impact on teaching and learning.

The school makes available for parents and carers all the required information. Termly and annual reports, and regular telephone calls, keep parents and carers well informed about students' achievements and behaviour. Parents and carers appreciate how the school works closely with them. The accommodation is well maintained. The five small classrooms and a communal area are suitable for the number of students using them. Classrooms include facilities for food technology, science, information and communication technology and art. There are no facilities to support the teaching of some aspects of design and technology, music or withdrawal rooms where students can work individually or in a smaller group. The complaints procedure complies fully with the regulations.

The school has improved since the last inspection and the proprietor has ensured that all regulations for independent schools are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	135803
Inspection number	420136
DfE registration number	878/6213

This inspection was carried out 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.

Type of school	Special school
School status	Independent
Age range of pupils	10–18 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	17
Number of part time pupils	3
Proprietor	Advanced Education Ltd
Chair	None
Headteacher	Swavek Nowakiewicz
Date of previous school inspection	3–4 February 2010
Annual fees (day pupils)	£31,800
Telephone number	01364 644823
Fax number	01364 644824
Email address	swavek.nowakiewicz@advancededucation.co.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

