

Advanced Education – Further Heights

C/O Advanced Education, Warrington School, Unit 2, Gatewarth Industrial Estate, Warrington, Cheshire, WA5 1DF

Inspection dates	23–24 October 2013	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- All students achieve well and make good progress because teaching is good and the curriculum is broad and balanced.
- Teachers manage what is often very challenging behaviour well. They create a good learning environment where students are keen to engage and succeed in their learning.
- Provision for the welfare, health and safety of students is good. Policies and procedures are robust and implemented effectively, ensuring that students are well cared for.
- Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders have ensured that good standards of teaching lead to good achievement and progress.

It is not yet outstanding because

- The new system of monitoring and tracking students' achievement and progress is not yet fully embedded. As a result, teachers do not have all of the information that they need to ensure that students achieve their best.
- Senior leaders do not conduct frequent lesson observations that consistently challenge teachers to improve their teaching.
- Teachers do not have enough opportunities to share good and outstanding practice in order to improve their teaching further.
- Some teachers use a limited range of resources and teaching strategies. As a result, lessons are not always interesting and students do not engage fully.

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 four lessons taught by two different teachers. The inspector looked at students' work and held meetings with the regional headteacher, lead tutor, teachers and students.
- The inspector looked at the school's documentation including schemes of work, teachers' planning, records of students' progress, assessment records and records pertaining to the professional development of staff. He checked the school's compliance with the regulations for independent schools.
- The inspector took account of the views expressed in five questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Chanan Tomlin, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Further Heights is a small special school for boys and girls catering for residential students aged from 11 to 18 years who have a history of unsuccessful placements elsewhere. The proprietors are Advanced Education. The school was opened in 2004 and operates from detached premises in a residential area.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs linked to their severe behavioural, emotional social difficulties. Many also have additional learning needs. Most students stay for between three to six months. Students are taught by a team of visiting teachers who cover a number of similar 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 school was last inspected in January 2010.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching and learning by:
 - embedding the new system of monitoring and tracking students' achievement and progress so that teachers can use this information to ensure students are challenged to achieve their best
 - improving the range of resources and teaching strategies used by teachers in lessons.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by strengthening systems for the professional development of teachers through:
 - conducting regular lesson observations that consistently challenge teachers to improve their teaching
 - giving teachers more opportunities to share the good and outstanding practice that exists within the school.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Achievement is good as a result of good teaching and a good curriculum. Students join school with a wide range of abilities and a range of special educational needs. All have significant behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Taking account of students' starting points identified through good baseline assessments when they start in the school and the short periods of time that they spend there, students make at least expected progress. Since the last inspection, most students achieved between one and eight Entry Level accreditations in subjects such as English, information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics, art and design, physical education (PE), science and preparation for working life. One student completed a GCSE short course and another gained three credits in a course accredited by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN).

Students are motivated and take interest in a broad range of activities. They acquire knowledge quickly and gain a secure understanding in all subjects taught, including reading, writing, communication skills and mathematics. They develop and apply skills effectively, ensuring that they are well-prepared for their futures in education, training or employment. The most able attain high standards as a result of the support and encouragement they receive from staff. Records show that students make good progress in managing and improving their behaviour and the ways that they interact socially, enabling them to focus their efforts on succeeding in their academic work. All students leaving the school since the last inspection went on to continue their education elsewhere, including some in mainstream schools.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Students' behaviour and personal development is good, demonstrating the good improvement they make from when they join the school. Behaviour observed during the inspection was outstanding. Records show that standards of behaviour are good over time and this contributes to good learning in lessons where students achieve well and make good progress. Teachers expect students to engage in learning and conduct themselves appropriately in school. Students respond well to these expectations. As a result, they have good attitudes towards learning, the atmosphere during lessons is purposeful and disruptions are minimal. Students are engaged and maintain their concentration in lessons; this has a good impact on their learning and progress. Students say that they feel safe at school. They have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying, and say that bullying rarely happens.

Attendance depends on the cohort in school; since the last inspection it has improved and is currently good. Lessons start punctually and students are often eager for them to get down to work. Staff have made good progress in helping students manage their anger and curb socially unacceptable behaviour. As a result, incidents in the school are reducing and students re-engage in their learning quickly when incidents happen. Students learn about public services in Britain during citizenship and personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons. Citizenship also provides them with an understanding of the legal system and a staff ensure that students are provided with a balanced approach to politics and controversial issues. As a result, students are well-equipped to contribute to British society in the future.

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students improve in self-confidence through the praise and encouragement that they receive from teachers when they succeed in their learning. They frequently take part in discussions and debates with staff when they explain their points of view and are encouraged to consider other opinions. As a result, they improve the ways in which they interact with others and gain self-awareness and self-esteem. Students learn about spirituality through religious education, art and music. They learn to

appreciate nature through outdoor activities and walks in the countryside. They consider moral issues through PSHE, discussions about themes such as diversity and bullying, and through well-considered guidance from staff. Students learn about other faiths and gain an understanding of other cultures through religious education, food technology and citizenship. They visit places of worship and take interest in other cultures. As a result, they are respectful and strongly committed to promoting good relationships between all people.

Quality of teaching

Good

Teaching is good, enabling students to achieve well and make good progress even when they attend the school for relatively short periods of time. Teachers expect students to achieve well; they plan lessons carefully according to the needs and abilities of each student in order to consistently enable them to make good progress. As a result, less able students develop knowledge, skills and understanding in all subjects systematically and those that are more able are challenged appropriately, securing good achievement and progress for all. Reading, writing, communication skills and mathematics are taught effectively; students gain skills in these areas and capably apply these across a range of subjects. Teachers observe students' responses in lessons and reshape tasks to suit every circumstance. They ask questions skilfully in order to ensure that students learn well, and encourage students to think for themselves and work independently. In a mathematics lesson observed, a Year 10 student experimented with different ways to work out complicated equations on his own.

Teachers have successfully created a positive learning environment where students take education seriously, are interested and engaged. They manage challenging behaviour capably, ensuring that students re-engage quickly if a lesson is disrupted. During the inspection, one student commented that teachers are 'quite smart' and that they manage behaviour well. Teachers mark students' work carefully and point out areas that need improvement. They check the progress of students regularly to ensure that students achieve well and make consistent progress. Students are tested regularly on what they have learnt. These results help students to appreciate their achievements and focus on areas that they need to improve. Testing also helps senior leaders adjust the curriculum to suit the needs of individual students. The school has introduced a new system of monitoring and tracking students' achievement and progress. However, it is not yet fully embedded and teachers are not yet fully competent in using the information gathered to ensure that students are challenged to achieve their very best.

In the outstanding practice observed during the inspection, lessons were paced well and teachers used a very good range of resources and teaching strategies to captivate students' interest and keep them on task at all times. For example, during a design and technology lesson where students designed and built a clock, the teacher encouraged them to use a wide range of resources and to be imaginative and creative. The teacher integrated important aspects of numeracy, literacy and art into this lesson, which also involved a valuable discussion about students' interest and plans for future employment. Lessons that require improvement are supported with only basic resources, are teacher-led and involve only a few strategies to engage students in learning.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced, and enables all students to make good progress in all areas of learning including reading, writing, communication skills and mathematics. The curriculum follows the National Curriculum and students are encouraged to take externally accredited courses such as Entry Level Certificate courses, GCSE, BTEC qualifications and ASDAN. It is supported with detailed schemes of work and planning that show good progression from one competency to another, and sets out clearly how students of all ages and abilities are challenged and supported. Students agree that the curriculum is good and fully meets their needs. Students are well-prepared for their future well-being through a strong emphasis on English and

mathematics. During design and technology lessons students learn how to design and build different structures, providing them with hands-on experiences that equip them with knowledge and skills for the future. Students receive careers advice during PSHE and from a careers liaison officer who visits the school regularly.

Provision for PSHE is good; it is provided as a discrete subject, through science and through regular discussions with teachers. The curriculum is enriched with a good programme of activities that take place regularly. These include trips to a lake, animal sanctuary, libraries and museums. Students are accompanied to local theatres and events that complement their education. Activities are planned carefully and cater to the needs and interests of students; students look forward to these activities and participate fully. A good programme of study is in place for those above compulsory school age to ensure that they achieve well and make good progress. They are encouraged to gain qualifications according to their interests and abilities. Consequently, students take a range of courses including GCSE, Entry Levels, BTEC and the AQA Unit Award Scheme.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Good

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of students is good and all of the independent school regulations for this standard are met. The school has established robust policies and procedures that are in keeping with current legislation and guidance, including effective procedures for safeguarding and for preventing bullying. Policies and procedures are reviewed regularly and implemented effectively. Staff are committed to providing high levels of care and support, and are competent in promoting students' health and safety. Arrangements for safeguarding are robust and are regularly monitored; the school implements its child protection policy effectively. All staff and proprietors have received enhanced clearance to work with children and all the required checks are included in a single central register. The designated persons for child protection and all staff have attended appropriate training at the required intervals. Arrangements for the recruitment of new staff are robust; during induction, new staff receive clear information on their responsibilities in ensuring that children are always well-protected. Staff undertake a broad range of training related to health and safety, including first-aid qualifications.

The school has a good level of fire safety; a detailed fire risk assessment is in place and the premises and all equipment are checked regularly. Fire drills are regular events and are duly recorded. Risk assessments for all activities in and out of school, and for the premises and accommodation, are comprehensive. Supervision is consistently good and effective arrangements are in place to ensure that all students, including those identified to be at risk, are kept safe.

The school works well with parents, carers and other agencies to ensure that students are safe; students confirm that they feel safe and well-supported. Staff promote good behaviour in school and during trips, ensuring that there is a calm atmosphere where students engage in learning. Students learn about healthy lifestyles during PSHE and science and the school provides healthy, balanced meals. Students often take part in important discussions with staff about avoiding risks to their health. As a result, they consider healthy options and ways to change their lifestyles. Students acknowledge that staff understand their needs and appreciate the support they have when they feel the need to calm down during lessons.

Leadership and management

Good

Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders communicate high ambition and expectations to staff and ensure that students achieve well. A regional headteacher, who is in charge of a number of schools attached to the company, systematically challenges staff to improve the provision. A lead tutor attends the school regularly and works directly with students to ensure that they achieve well and make good progress. The regional headteacher has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas that need to improve, and has produced a realistic self-evaluation document and development plan that sets out how priorities for

improvement will be addressed. As a result, the school consolidates good practice and secures improvements consistently.

Senior leaders have established a programme of regular training for staff to help them improve their teaching and provide them with important skills and knowledge. They conduct lesson observations in order to assess standards of teaching and to help teachers develop their teaching skills. However, these lesson observations are not frequent enough and do not consistently challenge teachers to improve their teaching. Although good and outstanding teaching practice exists within the school, teachers are not given enough opportunities to share the best ideas.

School leaders have ensured that all of the independent school standards are met. The school has produced effective policies to ensure that students make good progress in all subjects, including literacy and numeracy. The curriculum is organised well and provides good opportunities for all students to achieve well and make good progress. The school's ethos promotes good behaviour and personal development, and the provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Staff and resources are deployed well as a result of careful planning and organisation. The school works well with parents, carers and other agencies to secure positive benefits for students. The premises and accommodation are well-suited to the school's requirements. All areas of the school are well-maintained and decorated to a suitable standard. The school satisfies all of the requirements with regard to the provision of information to parents and carers. The complaints procedure meets the regulations.

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/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	131446
Inspection number	420222
DfE registration number	354/6026

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	Independent
School status	Secondary special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD)
Age range of pupils	11–18 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Advanced Education
Chair	Mr Riz Khan
Headteacher	Mr Tariq Verpalen
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2010

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