

# **Inspection report**

## **Sporting Edge School**

**Independent school**

**DfES ref no: 330/6109**

**Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002**

**Dates of inspection: 23 – 26 January 2006**

## **INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY**

### **Purpose and scope of the inspection**

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

### **Information about the school**

Sporting Edge is a small, independent secondary school based in St. George's Church Centre, Newtown, a district in Birmingham. The proprietors are the headteacher and deputy headteacher of the school. It opened in September 2003 to provide an alternative education for pupils aged from 14 -16. Pupils are referred to the school for admission by the local authority and other local schools. There are 26 pupils on roll: 22 boys and 4 girls. Pupils join and leave throughout the year. All of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly Black Caribbean, Black African and Asian heritages. Most of the pupils have emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) and have a history of disrupted schooling, poor attendance or exclusion from other schools. There are a small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). These are pupils who on arrival in this country did not find a place in local schools. They are inappropriately placed in a predominantly EBD environment. No pupils are at the early stages of acquiring English and none have a statement of special educational needs. All pupils follow General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) courses in English, mathematics, biology, physical education, leisure and tourism, information and communication technology (ICT) plus personal, social, health education (PSHE) and Citizenship programmes.

The school aims to ensure *'that all students are given the opportunity to develop personally, achieve academically, progress onto further education or training and have a greater access into a more successful adult life'*.

### **Summary of main findings**

Sporting Edge provides a satisfactory quality of education and fulfils its aims. The headteacher has established a positive learning environment where some of the most vulnerable pupils in society re-engage with education and gain success in national examinations. Provision for pupils' personal, social and moral development is good. Relationships between adults and pupils are a strength of the school. Given the school's context, behaviour is generally satisfactory and sometimes good. Pupils know the boundaries and respond well to the good role models set by the staff. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school but attendance and punctuality varies greatly. Not enough is done to ensure all pupils arrive on time and attend regularly.

Teaching is satisfactory and this enables pupils to make at least satisfactory progress. Pupils with EBD make good progress in improving their behaviour and attitudes to learning. The listening and speaking skills of pupils learning English as an additional language are developing well; however, their comprehension and writing skills require further improvement.

The curriculum is satisfactory but does not cater effectively for pupils' aesthetic, creative and cultural development. Planning and assessment of pupils' progress is not fully effective.

**What the school does well:**

- it provides a caring and positive learning environment where pupils re-engage with learning, improve their behaviour and gain success in GCSE qualifications;
- its adults relate well to pupils and set good role models for them to follow;
- its staff are committed, enthusiastic and work well together as a team and, as a result they manage pupils' very difficult behaviour effectively and are successful in developing pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence;
- its pupils enjoy school, have generally positive attitudes to learning and are free from harassment; and
- it makes good use of outside agencies to support pupils' learning.

**What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations:**

- improve the quality of the curriculum, teaching and assessment as indicated in section 1;
- rectify all outstanding health and safety issues identified in section 3;
- ensure that appropriate checks are carried out on all staff and others who work in school before their appointment as noted in section 4;
- ensure the school provides facilities for pupils who are ill and that there is sufficient hard space area for outside play, as indicated in section 5;
- ensure that an annual account of income and expenditure for funded pupils is submitted to the local authority as identified in section 6;
- improve the quality and availability of information given to parents and prospective parents as detailed in section 6; and
- ensure the complaints policy complies with regulations as indicated in section 7.

**What the school must do to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002**

In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA, the school should:

- devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.

# **COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION**

## **1. The quality of education provided by the school**

### **The quality of the curriculum**

The curriculum is satisfactory and provides an appropriate programme of activities that enables pupils to make at least satisfactory progress in all subjects.

The school offers six GCSE courses at various levels plus PSHE and Citizenship programmes. The pupils say they come to Sporting Edge because it offers the national qualifications required for jobs and further study. The school rightly concentrates on developing pupils' literacy, numeracy and information, communication and technology (ICT) skills as these are essential for future economic well-being. Pupils' progress in these basic skills is satisfactory. However, not enough is done to improve their writing and presentation skills and EAL pupils' comprehension skills, as these are holding back success in examinations. Insufficient attention is given in the curriculum to promote pupils' independent learning. The curriculum does not yet fully meet the needs of the more able and EAL learners.

Planning is mainly focused on the examination syllabi and teachers cover the course requirements suitably. The planning documentation lacks detail about how well differing needs and abilities will be met, and not enough is said about the methods and resources to be used. There are no schemes of work for aesthetic and creative subjects or design and technology. These subjects are not taught during the course of the year.

The curriculum is enhanced by a suitable range of educational visits to places such as Stratford-upon-Avon to support work about Shakespeare. Effective links have been established with a number of local authority and other agencies. For example, the outside support for PSHE is good and inspectors saw some very effective work to improve pupils' drugs awareness. Good links exist with the local careers and life skills service and this ensures pupils are given a suitable range of experiences to prepare them for adult life. Pupils' contribution to school life is limited. They are listened to but are not actively encouraged to voice their views and be involved in decisions that affect their lives.

### **The quality of teaching and assessment**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. A strength is the good relations established between the pupils and staff and the pupils themselves. At times pupils' behaviour is unsatisfactory and their conduct unacceptable. On such occasions staff manage their behaviour effectively and this means they remain on task, complete the work set and succeed. Pupils have generally positive attitudes to learning and recognise how they are being helped to improve. They say that they enjoy school are making progress and improving their behaviour and attitudes to learning.

In the most effective lessons work is pitched at the right level and builds well on pupils' previous learning. Questioning is used effectively to consolidate and extend

pupils' thinking. In the less effective lessons there are some common weaknesses. Teachers' expectations are not high enough and lessons take too little account of pupils' differing needs, particularly those of the more able and EAL learners. Work is over-directed by the teacher with too few opportunities for pupils to work independently and find things out for themselves. Class time is not always used wisely. On occasions, lessons do not start promptly and time is lost handing out resources and equipment. Individual pupils arrive late and this means they do not complete tasks or make the progress they are capable of.

Homework is set but is not completed by most pupils. Where individuals do continue their studies beyond school they achieve better results. The school does not do enough to get pupils to complete homework and to involve parents in their child's learning.

All pupils take GCSE examinations that are externally marked. Suitable systems are in place to judge pupils' attainment and teachers know the likely grades individuals will achieve in the national tests. Attainment is much lower than normal because most pupils have had a disrupted education which has considerably slowed their progress. Results show that there is an improving trend in pupils' performance. There are satisfactory arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics and biology. End of unit tests give pupils an understanding of what they can do and how to improve but pupils say they are unclear what level they will achieve in their final examinations. The assessment of pupils' prior learning and the tracking of their progress in other subjects are not robust or systematic enough. The arrangements for ensuring course work is completed are not fully effective, particularly in ICT. Weaknesses in lesson planning and insufficient tracking of pupils' progress in subjects other than mathematics and biology mean that work is not always appropriately matched to pupils' differing needs and abilities.

Resources are adequate and are used effectively. There are sufficient text books and computers to meet course requirements.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

No.

***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

*In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- *ensure the school develops comprehensive plans and schemes of work for all subjects (paragraph 1(2));*
- *ensure the curriculum gives pupils experience of design and technology and creative and aesthetic learning (paragraph 1(2)(a)(ii));*
- *ensure lessons are well planned, suitable activities are used, and class time is managed wisely (paragraph 1(3)(c));*
- *ensure that all teachers take pupils' needs, aptitudes and prior attainment into account when planning lessons (paragraph 1(3)(d)); and*

- *implement a coherent framework to measure how well pupils achieve in each stage and ensure the needs of different groups of pupils are reflected in the planning of all teachers (paragraph 1(3)(g)).*

## **2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

Provision for pupils' personal, moral and social education is good. The school's contribution to their spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory.

Provision for pupils' personal development is good. The PSHE programme is effective in developing the necessary inter-personal skills for living and working together. It is also successful in helping pupils resolve conflicts and challenge the values held by individuals and those in the wider community. Although many pupils have severe behavioural difficulties and show staff disrespect at times, they generally have good relations with them.

Provision for pupils' moral and social development is good. The school has a clear set of moral values and pupils are taught to distinguish right from wrong. For the most part they adhere to the school's values and behaviour codes. Socially pupils mix together well. The procedures for preventing racism are very effective. The PSHE programme teaches pupils to respect the law and provides them with knowledge and information about public institutions, such as Parliament and the local emergency services. Steps have been taken to involve pupils in the local community through a youth club funded by the Youth Inclusion Project. Pupil uptake in the project has been good.

Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory overall but varies from day-to-day. For most individuals to reach this level is a real achievement. A significant number of pupils are emotionally immature and have low self-esteem. The school is successful in improving pupils' self-confidence and modifying their negative attitudes which hinder learning and slow their progress. Good use is being made of a learning mentor to improve behaviour. Pupils say this input has helped them significantly with their anger management and their ability to cope with lessons and each other. Effective systems are in place to deal with serious behaviour issues and these are recorded appropriately.

Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. The school is successful in getting pupils to develop a sense of respect for themselves and others. The climate is providing a set of values and principles which informs and develops pupils' perspective on life and improves their life chances. The school is sensitive to those from different religious backgrounds by providing appropriate opportunities for prayer at local places of worship. Pupils are encouraged to think about their responses to a range of spiritual issues in their PSHE lessons.

Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. They are developing a satisfactory understanding of British culture but not enough is done to widen their knowledge and understanding of other cultures and lifestyles. Steps have been taken to introduce pupils to some of the religious and cultural traditions represented in the locality, but

these have not been developed systematically. Pupils appreciate and respect other people's values and beliefs and say there is no racism or sexism.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

### **3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils**

The school has a written health and safety policy including guidance on the supervision of pupils on activities outside school. However, the policy does not take sufficient account of Department for Education and Skills (DfES) guidance. No formal risk assessments are carried out to identify potential sources of danger on the school site and risk assessments are not carried out for all educational visits. The school does not keep an up-to-date electrical equipment register. Therefore, there is no guarantee that when annual checks are made all electrical items are subject to inspection. No written record is kept of annual electrical checks and equipment is not marked as having been passed safe to use.

The school has a written child protection policy but it is not comprehensive enough. For example, it does not say enough about the types of abuse and how incidents are recorded. The procedures to be followed if a member of staff is accused of abuse are unclear. The two designated members of staff responsible for child protection have not received appropriate training. The school has a written behaviour policy but it does not clearly state the sanctions to be adopted if pupils misbehave. The bullying and anti-racism policies are of good quality and are effective in ensuring pupils are free of harassment.

The June 2005 fire officer's report indicated the school has a satisfactory level of fire safety. Fire drills are regular and outcomes of practices are suitably recorded. The school does not have a written First Aid policy. There is therefore a lack of guidance on how to treat injuries or pupils' medical conditions and unclear hygiene procedures in the event of a blood spillage. There is no suitably trained First-Aider on site at all times. Pupils are supervised adequately inside the school. However, on occasions there is insufficient supervision of pupils outside during break and lunchtimes.

The school keeps an admission register on computer but it is not kept in accordance with the regulations. Attendance registers are well kept and are in good order.

The school has not drawn up a three-year plan of action to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

No.

***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

*In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- *improve the quality of the child protection policy to better safeguard the welfare of pupils (paragraph 3(2)(b));*

- *ensure that members of staff with designated responsibility for child protection receive appropriate training (paragraph 3(2)(b));*
- *ensure the behaviour policy sets out the sanctions to be adopted if pupils misbehave (paragraph 3(2)(d));*
- *ensure that thorough risk assessments are undertaken for the school premises and educational visits, and that action is taken and outcomes are formally recorded (paragraphs 3(2)(c) and 3(4));*
- *ensure an electrical equipment register is kept and a written record is maintained of all items subject to an annual electrical check (paragraph 3(4));*
- *ensure a written First Aid policy is produced and a designated First-Aider is on the school premises at all times during the school day (paragraph 3(6));*
- *improve the level of supervision of pupils outside during breaks and lunchtimes (paragraph 3(7)); and*
- *ensure the admission register is maintained in accordance with regulations (paragraph 3(9)).*

***What does the school need to do to comply with the DDA?***

*In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA the school should:*

- *devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.*

**4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff**

The head teacher and his wife are the proprietors of the school and undertake most of the teaching duties within it.

The school has carried out Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks at an enhanced level for all teaching staff. The school has not carried out the necessary CRB checks on one non-teaching colleague and another person who works in the school but is not employed by them.

The school has an appropriate recruitment policy and checks are made to confirm the identity and qualifications of prospective staff. References are sought and the information gained is taken into account before confirming appointments. However, checks are not carried out to confirm candidates' medical fitness or previous employment history. Induction procedures for newly appointed staff are satisfactory.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

*No.*

***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

*In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- ensure that, prior to their appointment, all staff and others who work in the school have been subject to a CRB check to confirm their suitability to work with children (paragraph 4(b)); and*
- ensure that, prior to confirmation of their appointment, appropriate checks are carried out on applicants for posts to confirm their medical fitness and previous employment history (paragraph 4(c)).*

**5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation**

The school is housed in part of St George's Church Centre. There are two classrooms, an office, a computer room, reception and dining areas plus a quiet room. The accommodation and premises are of satisfactory quality.

The school is in sound decorative order and is clean and tidy. The kitchen is hygienic and there are adequate facilities for dining and food preparation. There is sufficient access so that emergency evacuations can be accomplished safely and pupils can enter and leave the school in safety and comfort.

There are no school grounds so pupils use the public park next door for recreational purposes. The grassed area is used when conditions are suitable, but it cannot be used all the year round. There is insufficient hard play space available for recreational use. At times pupils are not properly supervised outside. The school does not have appropriate facilities for the care of sick or injured pupils.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

*No.*

***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

*In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- ensure appropriate facilities are provided for pupils who are ill (paragraph 5(l)); and*
- ensure sufficient outside hard space is provided for recreational purposes and pupils are properly supervised outside (paragraph 5(t)).*

**6. The quality of information for parents and other partners**

The school provides parents with useful information about pupils' attainment and progress and the arrangements made for admissions, discipline and exclusions. The information provided does not fully meet the regulations.

The school does not keep or submit an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred in respect of pupils funded by the local authority.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

No.

***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

*In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- *ensure the school provides parents and prospective parents with the following information:*
  - *the full names, usual term time and holiday address and telephone numbers of the school proprietors (paragraph 6(2)(b));*
  - *a statement of the school's ethos (paragraph 6(2)(d));*
  - *the particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language (paragraph 6(2)(f));*
- *ensure information is available on request about:*
  - *the sanctions adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving (paragraph 6(2)(h));*
  - *details of the complaints procedure together with details of the number of complaints registered during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j));*
  - *the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 6(2)(k)); and*
- *ensure the school keeps and submits an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of pupils funded by the local authority (paragraph 6(7)).*

## **7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints**

The school has recently drafted a written procedure for handling complaints. It does not fully meet requirements because the timescales for the management of complaints are not specified. The document has not yet been made available to parents and prospective parents. This is because the school is awaiting final ratification and agreement of the procedures by the local authority who fund a number of pupils at the school.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

No.

***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

*In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- ensure that the complaints procedure is made available on request to parents of pupils and prospective parents (paragraph 7(b)); and*
- set out clear timescales for the management of complaints (paragraph 7(c)).*

## SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Sporting Edge
DfES Number:	330/6109
Type of school:	Secondary
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	14 – 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 22      Girls: 4      Total: 26
Annual fees (day pupils):	£6,000
Address of school:	St George's Church Centre Bridge Street West Newtown Birmingham B19 2YX
Telephone number:	0121 3337325
Fax number:	0121 3337325
Email address:	sporting edge_2006@yahoo.co.uk
Headteacher:	Mr Stephen McCullough
Proprietor:	Mr Stephen McCullough and Mrs Carol McCullough
Reporting Inspector:	Mr David Rzeznik HMI
Date of inspection:	23 – 26 January 2006

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