

Sporting Edge

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	330/6109
Unique Reference Number	134403
Inspection number	322271
Inspection dates	2–3 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Patricia Potheary

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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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, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Sporting Edge is a non-affiliated secondary school based in St George's Church Centre, Newtown, a district in Birmingham. The proprietor and founder is the headteacher of the school, which is jointly managed with his wife, the deputy headteacher. It opened in September 2005 to provide an alternative education for disaffected students aged 14 to 16, with a strong emphasis on the disciplines of sport. Students are referred for admission to the school by Birmingham, and other local authorities. Students join and leave throughout the year. There are currently five boys and two girl on roll, all in Year 10, although up to 30 students attend during the school year. Year 11 had left by the time of the inspection. Most of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly Black Caribbean, Black African and Asian heritages. Most of the students have emotional, social and behavioural difficulties and have a history of disrupted schooling, poor attendance or exclusion from other schools. The school was last inspected in January 2006.

Evaluation of the school

Sporting edge provides a satisfactory overall quality of education for its students. Students are cared for well, kept safe and are helped to overcome their reluctance to learn. The school places a strong and successful emphasis on its main aim of following rules in sport to help students develop personally and academically,. The satisfactory level of education remains similar overall to the findings from the last inspection, although more regulations are met. The school now meets all but two of the regulations, both concerning the curriculum, which is inadequate.

Quality of education

By coming to Sporting Edge, students are able to re-engage with education and acquire a range of essential basic skills. They make satisfactory progress overall. The curriculum is strong in English and mathematics, with all students achieving either GCSE or basic skills qualifications to at least a satisfactory level. For many this represents a considerable achievement, transforming their future prospects. A majority go on to further education. Students say that they like coming to the school because they are able to achieve some of the GCSE qualifications they need for the

future. The curriculum is inadequate, however, because it is too narrow and not well planned to fully meet the diverse needs and interests of the students. This is recognised by the school. With the exception of one student, no science was taught last year. Beside key skills, sport is the main focus of the curriculum, particularly personal fitness and it is highly motivating for the students. In most years qualifications are achieved in this subject. Students also study information and communication technology (ICT), although the level of qualifications achieved this year is low because the subject does not have a suitably challenging scheme of work. There is a good focus on personal, social and health education with students reporting many benefits in terms of their understanding about important issues such as drugs awareness, the law and social skills. This programme, however, is another that lacks a well planned scheme of work to ensure sufficient breadth, for example, understanding of other cultures.

The school does link with other providers to meet the different needs of some students and in the last two years a small number of students took courses in construction, catering and hair and beauty where they did well. There is no curriculum for music, art or drama although the school has recently employed an art teacher to begin in September. Well regarded commercial schemes of work are in place for some subjects with adequate resources. These are not well differentiated to meet individual student needs, however, which means that some students do not engage fully with the subjects or qualifications being offered. All students study a short module on leisure and tourism which supports their future choices and a few study GCSE business and communication systems. Good links with the Connexions careers advice service and some work experience further supports this process. There is no well constructed plan for developing the curriculum although school leaders have a broadly accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses.

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory. There are several strengths in English and mathematics where many students are successfully helped to achieve their GCSEs. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects which supports their detailed knowledge of individual student's abilities and secures the sound and sometimes good progress they make. Relationships in lessons and support for individuals are good, leading to students feeling confident enough to begin to learn again. Students make a good contribution in lessons through discussion and teachers' skilled questioning encourages this well. Assessment is regular, particularly in English and mathematics where end of unit tests are used to check and support progress. However, assessment lacks consistency of quality and approach from one subject to the next. Information on student progress is not used systematically enough to provide a secure overview of student learning or support improvement planning by the leadership of the school.

Most lessons lack prior planning to effectively meet individual needs, which is why progress is satisfactory rather than good. However the work does meet different needs to an extent through expected outcome and by support, although this is not clearly evident in the planning. Many lessons lack a wide enough variety of methods

and activities to bring them to life and increase students' enjoyment. For example, the school recognises that there is not enough opportunity for students to learn independently or work in groups. Teachers do not have sufficient contact with good practice elsewhere to help them develop better teaching.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the student

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is satisfactory. Students enjoy school and attendance, although low, is much improved upon their previous records. Many students gradually increase their attendance as their placement progresses and it is satisfactory for the majority. Students like some of their lessons, but would like to see more variety in the subjects offered. Behaviour is satisfactory. Students behave well in social situations and when out on trips. Most demonstrate improvements to their behaviour, once they begin to attend regularly. This is not always the case in lessons, although most run smoothly because behaviour is well managed. Parents are positive about their children's improved behaviour and enjoyment of school. Students understand right from wrong and respect the trust given to them at the school so that the environment and other peoples' belongings are rarely disturbed. There is a spiritual element to some aspects of the curriculum which students respond to well. This is evident in their poetry, for example. Students have limited awareness of other cultures, religions or indeed the creative arts, due to deficiencies in the curriculum, a fact they commented upon. Students make a satisfactory and increasing contribution to the school and wider community and their skills in this area are developing, especially through the school council. Students have represented the school in two football tournaments this year. They show particular care and concern towards each other, often texting to remind someone to come in on time or attend an examination. They also like to help each other with their work. Students would like to have a greater say in the work of the school. Students are satisfactorily prepared for their futures overall and their prospects are substantially improved by being at the school.

Welfare, health and safety of the students

The overall welfare, health and safety of students is good. All procedures to safeguard students are robust and meet requirements. Risk assessment and fire drills are carried out regularly. There are very good links with other agencies to coordinate the care and welfare of students. Some good elements of personal, social and health education are supported by strong links with other agencies, especially the police and church. Students contribute to the behaviour and anti-bullying policies. Bullying is usually dealt with effectively and students generally feel safe in school. Provision to encourage healthy living is outstanding. There are extensive opportunities for physical activity and excellent provision to encourage healthy eating. A key strength of the school is the very healthy lunches, which are cooked

on the premises and the good provision of fruit snacks and water. The school meets all requirements with regard to the disability discrimination act and the building is fully accessible to those attending.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school makes all the required arrangements to ensure the suitability of the proprietor, directors and staff who work there.

School's premises and accommodation

The school's premises and accommodation meet all the requirements so that students can learn effectively, safely and securely. The premises are shared with other users, but not during the school day. The outside areas are adequate, with hard standing and a community green space, although these lack sufficient facilities to support relaxed social interaction or recreation, such as seating or pitch markings. There is a good, hygienic kitchen and dining area and plenty of classroom accommodation. The school uses the good quality sports hall, fitness suite and dance studio at the local sixth form college. There is an ICT suite but no other specialist rooms, for example, for science, design and technology or the creative arts.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information for parents, carers and other interested people meets all requirements. The school prospectus is clear, up- to-date and helpful to parents and all the expected documentation is made available. Contact with parents is regular and their views are sought and acted upon.

Procedures for handling complaints

There is a clear and suitable complaints procedure, which meets regulations and is drawn to the attention of parents and carers. No complaints have been received within the last year.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- establish appropriate curriculum plans and schemes of work for all subjects, and implement them effectively (1(2))
- provide students with experience in the following areas of learning: scientific, technological and aesthetic and creative (1(2)(a)(ii)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following point for development.

- Establish more formal systems for monitoring the quality of provision and outcomes of learning so that weaknesses in teaching, curriculum planning and student progress can be more clearly identified and addressed.

School details

Name of school	Sporting Edge		
DCSF number	330/6109		
Unique reference number	134403		
Type of school	Secondary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 2005		
Age range of student	14–15		
Gender of student	MI		
Number on roll (full-time student)	Boys: 5	Girls: 2	Total: 7
Number on roll (part-time student)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of boarders	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of student with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Number of student who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 0
Annual fees (day student)	£ 9,000		
Annual fees (boarders)	£ N/A		
Address of school	St George's Church Centre Bridge Street West Newtown Birmingham West Midlands B19 2YX		
Telephone number	01213 337325		
Fax number	01213 337325		
Email address	Sporting_edge2006@yahoo.co.uk		
Head teacher	Stephen McCullough		
Proprietor	Stephen McCullough		
Reporting inspector	Patricia Pothecary		
Dates of inspection	2–3 July 2008		