

The Collegiate Centre for Values Education for Life

Independent Special School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	330/6101
Unique Reference Number	132743
Inspection number	334275
Inspection dates	19 May 2009
Reporting inspector	David Rzeznik HMI

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.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding students and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

The Collegiate Centre for Values Education for Life is a small, independent special day school in Birmingham. It opened in April 2000 and is privately owned by a non-profit making limited company. It is registered for 40 students. There are currently 24 on roll aged 14 to 17 years and all attend full time. A number of students are on the roll of local secondary schools and access provision in this school on a full-time or part-time basis. They have been placed here by a range of other providers to prevent them dropping out of school.

Around half of the students are White British. A third are Black, mainly of Caribbean origin and the rest are from Pakistani backgrounds. Most have a statement of special educational needs and all are referred and funded by two local authorities or local schools. All students have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and some have specific learning difficulties or mental health problems. Most have been permanently excluded from other schools and over half have a criminal record. All have had a disrupted education and many have a history of not attending school, which has severely impaired their attainment and self-esteem. Over half of the students have been admitted in the past 12 months. The school was last inspected in October 2006. It aims to 're-engage young people in education, to encourage students to become positive citizens, to reduce levels of offending behaviour and to develop a sense of respect and empathy for others'.

Evaluation of the school

The quality of education provided is good. The school fulfils its aims. The most vulnerable students in society are successfully re-integrated back into education. The high level of one-to-one support, effective teaching and a curriculum that is well matched to students' needs, ensures they make good progress in their basic skills and personal development. Behaviour modification work is very effective. Racial harmony is a key strength. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Parents and local authority providers hold positive views about the school. The school meets all except two of the regulatory requirements.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. All students on roll receive full-time education, which is a substantial improvement on the amount of tuition that they have received in past placements. Sound schemes of work exist for all subjects, including personal, social and health education (PSHE). They are based on National Curriculum guidance and GCSE examination syllabi. Appropriate lesson plans are produced that reflect the guidance in the schemes of work.

Staff suitably assess students' needs and capabilities on entry and allocate them to one of three educational programmes. The flexibility of the curriculum is a key strength. The GAP programme is for students whose social, emotional and basic skills are poor. Students are taught one-to-one, mainly by learning mentors, because they have specific learning needs and have great difficulty coping with formal classroom activities and group work. Each student has an individual education plan that is tailored to personal capabilities. Provision is appropriately based on developing students' personal, social and emotional skills alongside developing literacy, numeracy and life skills. Getting students to manage their anger more effectively is a key aspect of the work, so students can re-engage with education very well indeed. Provision is effectively matched to the objectives outlined in their statements of special educational needs.

As students progress they move into the Bridge programme where they study a wider range of subjects including English, mathematics, science, art, information and communication technology, and PSHE. They continue to receive a high level of individual tuition but are encouraged to work more in groups. If students have the ability they will be in a learning group where they undertake GCSE and Entry Level accredited courses in a broad range of academic subjects plus a Preparation for Working life course. Whichever programme students follow they receive mentoring, careers, sex and drugs education. Some individuals undertake valuable vocational training with local providers. However, some students with severe behavioural and social problems are unable to cope with formal work experience. A good range of trips, including a residential experience, are offered and most students benefit from them.

Teaching and assessment are good. Provision enables students to make good progress in both their basic skills and in modifying their behaviour. On entry students' literacy and numeracy skills are suitably assessed. Personality and emotional literacy testing is also carried out to determine which educational programme will be followed. Established procedures are in place to externally verify the standards achieved on accredited courses. Some very good one-to-one support is provided to get students to change their behaviour and improve their English and mathematical skills. Good work is done to encourage students to work collaboratively. A good feature is the regular monitoring of students' work ethic, effort, attitudes and behaviour using a traffic light system. Feedback is given to students in all of these areas which they welcome.

Records show that students' interpersonal skills are improving at a good rate and they are achieving passes in GCSE and Entry Level qualifications in subjects that they would have failed if they had not re-engaged with learning.

The teaching strengths include good use of computers to encourage students to find things out for themselves and to support higher level work in mathematics. Staff manage students' behaviour extremely well and they treat students with dignity and sensitivity. Assessment information is generally used well to ensure learning activities are matched closely to students' capabilities. However, there are occasions when expectations as to what they can achieve are not high enough. The marking of GCSE and Entry Level assignments is thorough. Weaknesses in work are pinpointed so students know what must be improved. This said, not enough attention is being paid to improving students' spelling, handwriting and presentation skills in class or when marking work. The school lacks policies in all three areas. Homework is not provided, so work done in class is not consolidated after school.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. A positive ethos and excellent relationships between staff and students boost very successfully their self-esteem and self-confidence. Students say that they feel at home and enjoy coming to school. Many say this is the best school they have been to and that staff understand them and help them to overcome their difficulties and raise their sights as to what can be achieved. Attendance is satisfactory. Many students are attending regularly for the first time in years.

Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. The school has been so successful in modifying students' behaviour you would not know that these youngsters have severe behavioural problems. Students know right from wrong and they are respectful to staff and each other. They also take good care of the premises and of school equipment. On the rare occasion when students do not conform, staff use a non-confrontational approach which successfully re-engages students with the task in hand. As a result, students trust staff and feel safe and secure in the calm environment. Racial harmony is excellent. Staff and students from different backgrounds mix very well together and there is a real respect for cultural diversity.

Students make a strong contribution to the school community. They are encouraged to play an active role in the running of the school. Students, staff and volunteers are elected to various committees that have responsibility for such things as equal opportunities, health and safety, fund raising and disciplinary matters. Each week students come together as a whole-school community to discuss the issues raised within committees and make decisions about different aspects of school life. They deal with concerns and general queries and resolve difficulties very effectively. They also organise events and raise funds for good causes. For example, students have raised £150 to sponsor a child's education in another country. The heavy emphasis on improving students' behaviour and basic skills coupled to getting them to work together productively, and attend regularly is ensuring students develop the necessary skills for further education or employment.

Safeguarding students' welfare, health and safety

The safeguarding of students' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. All of the required checks on the suitability of staff, proprietor and volunteers have been carried out. The single central record contains all of the necessary information. The high staff-to-student ratio means that students are very well supervised at all times.

A written child protection policy exists but it is not comprehensive enough. Procedures to be adopted in the event of a member of staff being accused of abuse are not sufficiently explicit. The recording system for logging child protection concerns is unclear. The educational visit policy is satisfactory but not fully implemented. Written risk assessments are not carried out for all visits or trips off-site. In contrast, sound risk assessments are conducted for the premises and for classroom activities. Fire safety procedures are satisfactory. A sound fire risk assessment has been undertaken, and the recommendations identified in the December 2008 fire officer's report have been addressed effectively.

Provision aims to develop and promote a healthy lifestyle but many students choose not to adopt one. Too many eat sweets in class and choose sugary drinks when thirsty. Given that the school allows students to smoke during breaks they do so. The school lacks a coherent strategy to reduce students' dependence on tobacco. No timescale is set within which students will stop smoking entirely, or reduce the number of cigarettes smoked during the day. Through the modernisation of the premises, the school has suitably planned to increase accessibility. For example, the installation of a lift ensures those with disabilities can move easily between floors. The school will be drawing up a three-year plan to review the possibility of further improving access to the premises and the curriculum.

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 provision for students' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- improve the quality of the child protection policy and ensure that procedures fully comply with the Department for Children, Schools and Families '*Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education*' guidance (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- ensure that comprehensive written risk assessments are undertaken for all educational visits and activities outside of school (paragraph 3(2)(c)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- develop spelling, handwriting and presentation policies and ensure they are implemented effectively to improve students' skills in all three aspects
- consider providing homework so that work done in class is consolidated after school.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

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 students		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of students' needs		✓		
How well students make progress in their learning		✓		

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of students		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of students

The overall welfare, health and safety of students			✓	
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School details

Name of school	The Collegiate Centre for Values Education for Life		
DCSF number	330/6101		
Unique reference number	132743		
Type of school	Special		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	April 2000		
Age range of students	13–17		
Gender of students	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 17	Girls: 7	Total: 24
Number on roll (part-time students)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of students with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 13	Girls: 5	Total: 18
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 3	Girls: 2	Total: 5
Annual fees (day students)	£12,690 - £32,940		
Address of school	College House 51-54 Hockley Hill Birmingham West Midlands B18 5AQ		
Telephone number	0121 523 0222		
Fax number	0121 523 5111		
Email address	val.russell@vefl.org.uk		
Headteacher	Ms Val Russell-Baker		
Proprietor	The Collegiate Centre for Values Education for Life		
Reporting inspector	David Rzeznik HMI		
Dates of inspection	19 May 2009		