

The Ashbrook Centre

Independent school progress report

DCSF registration number	886/6110
Unique Reference Number (URN)	130979
Inspection number	346520
Inspection dates	9 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Michael Best

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Purpose and scope of the visit

This inspection visit was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002¹, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005².

The visit was conducted at the request of the Registration Authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan following the previous inspection.

Information about the school

The Ashbrook Centre is an independent day school. It is located in a semi-detached house on a residential estate in Broadstairs. The school is owned by St Nicholas Lodge Ltd and provides education for up to eight male and female students aged 11 to 16 who are accommodated in the company's children's homes.

There are currently six students aged 13 to 16 years attending the school and a further two who are registered to the school but are receiving their education off-site. The students have severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and have experienced significant problems in their previous schools due to their challenging and/or disruptive behaviour. All but one of the students has a statement of special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most students have had several school placements in the past, including residential special schools and secure units, and have missed extensive periods of education.

The school aims to 'provide access to education and to form individual programmes that meet the young person's initial needs and ability to engage'.

Context of the visit

The school was inspected by Ofsted in June 2009. The school did not meet a number of the regulations. It submitted an action plan to remedy these shortcomings in October 2009. The plan was judged to be broadly satisfactory. This was the first monitoring visit to assess the school's progress towards implementing the action plan.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

The school has made satisfactory progress overall in implementing its action plan and now meets nearly all the regulations. At the time of the last inspection, the school's curriculum was inadequate and did not support students' progress or prepare them sufficiently well for adult life. The curriculum policy was not reflected in the provision made and those schemes of work that were in place did not ensure that students made progress in their learning. A comprehensive curriculum policy is now in place and all the requirements for this standard are now met. Individual schemes of work are drawn up for students in their personal learning plans, based on overarching plans that lead to a wide range of nationally accredited qualifications. The curriculum is now suitably broad and balanced, and gives students experience in all the areas of learning rather than narrowly focusing on English and mathematics. While most teaching takes place on the school premises students visit off-site specialist centres for lessons in the arts and physical education, and some attend vocational courses at a local college. Students in Key Stage 3 learn a modern foreign language and information and communication technology (ICT) is taught both discreetly and through other subjects. Students also use a commercial 'virtual learning platform' which enables them to extend and develop their studies across the curriculum.

The previous inspection found that the school took too little account of students' learning needs, particularly those with statements of special educational needs and /or disabilities. This shortcoming has been rectified and each student's personal learning plan is now appropriate to their age and aptitude and reflects the requirements of any statements of special educational needs. The plans are based on initial assessments made on entry and they are updated regularly. The 'virtual learning platform' is used to support students who are reluctant to attend or are building up towards their full-time provision.

There was no programme for personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) at the time of the previous inspection. This limited the positive effect the school staff could have on the students' personal development. The provision now includes specific, timetabled lessons that focus on developing students' citizenship skills. There are good links between this programme and the provision for students following accredited courses. These courses have also improved the previously unsatisfactory level of careers guidance by providing modules on career choices, job and course applications, and promoting learning about relationships, behaviour and practices in the workplace. This successfully complements the programme of visits and consultations arranged with external agencies such as Connexions and a local further education college.

At the time of the last inspection students did not learn and develop their skills knowledge and understanding as well as they could have done because staff did not have suitable curriculum and teaching plans from which to work. This has been remedied. The school's tracking systems now accurately reflect the progress

individual students make in their academic and personal development. Personal targets, which are measurable and achievable, are set and reviewed with students on a regular basis. The school has introduced a range of accredited courses that provide goals for students to achieve and enable them to access higher level courses and be better prepared for the workplace. Students were not adequately prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. The school has put in place a comprehensive programme to meet this deficiency. A feature of this is the promotion of students' cultural awareness, healthy living and participation in a harmonious community that encourages full equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination. On a daily basis, students have responsibility for tasks around the school. They earn encouragement and rewards for attendance and punctuality, with some given the responsibility of making their own way to school from their home each day. The school works closely with the staff at the homes to reinforce students' sense of responsibility and behaviour.

When the school was last inspected, teaching and assessment were judged inadequate. Teaching plans were unsatisfactory and staff did not have an appropriate understanding of the aptitudes and attainment of students. These shortcomings have been addressed. Lessons are carefully planned, taking account of course requirements and students' individual learning needs. Lesson objectives are shared with students, methods are appropriate and time is used effectively. Staff encourage and support individual students, managing their behaviour and anxieties sensitively yet firmly. Learning resources, which were previously judged too limited, have been improved and are now satisfactory. ICT is used effectively to support and develop students' learning, particularly in extending skills that will be helpful in the workplace.

At the time of the last inspection, the school had no formal means of demonstrating progress because there was no framework for assessing this or systematically tracking students' attainment over time. This has been resolved and the requirements are now met. The school's assessment framework tracks students' attainment and progress through end-of-unit and ongoing assessments. The framework is used effectively, enabling staff to more accurately focus students' learning within their lessons. The school did not previously have a framework by which students' performance could be evaluated but now does so by reference to both the school's aims and national norms through accredited study units.

The inspection in June 2009 found that students' cultural development was insufficiently well supported. The school has developed provision within its PSHCE programme which includes specific cultural and moral topics. There is a strong emphasis on recognising and dealing with discrimination in all forms, promoting students' understanding of different faiths and lifestyles, and raising their appreciation of tolerance and harmony between different cultures.

The previous inspection identified significant weaknesses in the school's safeguarding policies and practices. Staff have been trained and the policy revised with reference to the latest guidance. However, two minor omissions to the policy remain and, as a

result, the requirements are not fully met: the designated persons for child protection are referred to in the policy by their positions within the organisation and not by name; and the policy does not state that any deficiencies identified in procedures will be addressed immediately.

At the time of the last inspection, there were shortcomings in the school's policies and practices for preventing bullying and when taking students off the school site. The school has since revised its policies and these now meet requirements. Failings in the school's fire risk assessments were addressed promptly following the previous inspection and all the recommended works have now been completed. These now meet requirements. Similarly, the school's first-aid policy has been revised to address the identified shortcomings and now meets requirements. The school's revised health and safety policy also meets requirements. It outlines the roles and responsibilities of staff and includes a timetable for making checks and reviewing procedures. At the time of the last inspection, the school did not maintain a record of sanctions imposed on students for serious disciplinary offences. This has been rectified and the arrangements now in place satisfy requirements. The school has yet to fully meet requirements regarding its admission register because the information is currently held in two documents. However, the attendance register now meets requirements.

When the school was inspected in June 2009, there were various shortcomings in the arrangements for recording the checks made on the suitability of the proprietor and staff. These have been rectified and all the requirements are now met. The toilet facilities for students have been upgraded and now meet requirements. The school has drawn up a three-year plan, as required under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended which now meets requirements.

The previous inspection found that parents and carers were not informed, as required, that further information about the school's policies, procedures and about the academic performance of students in the previous academic year was available on request. A new prospectus has been produced which meets these requirements. The school has also taken appropriate action to meet the requirement for providing an account of the income and expenditure for each student to their funding local authority. The school's complaints procedure has been revised to take account of shortcomings in managing formal complaints and this now meets all the requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

As a result of this inspection visit, the school must take action to meet the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003³ as amended ('the Regulations'), as follows:

- ensure that the school's written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of students name the designated persons for child protection and state that any deficiencies in child-protection procedures will be promptly remedied (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- maintain an admission register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 3(9)).

³ www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.htm

School details

Name of school	The Ashbrook Centre		
DCSF number	886/6110		
Unique reference number (URN)	130979		
Type of school	Special school for students with severe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	July 2006		
Age range of students	11–18 years		
Gender of students	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 7	Girls: 1	Total: 8
Number of students with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 7	Girls: 0	Total: 7
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 7	Girls: 1	Total: 8
Annual fees (day students)	£30,725		
Address of school	8 Almond Close Broadstairs Kent CT10 2NQ		
Telephone number	01843 869240		
Fax number	01843 869240		
Email address	theashbrookcentre@yahoo.co.uk		
Headteacher	Nigel Troop		
Proprietor	Stephen Payne		
Reporting inspector	Michael Best		
Dates of inspection	9 February 2010		