

TLC The Learning Centre

Independent school progress monitoring inspection report

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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.^{1,2}

The inspection 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

TLC, The Learning Centre, opened in September 2010 and provides full-time education for up to 12 girls aged between 11 and 16 years of age. There are currently 8 girls on roll aged between 11 and 16 years, 4 of whom have a statement of special educational needs. They all have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion from mainstream schools and/or special provision. They are placed and funded by Bromley local authority where the school is located. The school's aim is to 'offer a nurturing environment tailored to the individual student's needs and provide mainstream and alternative education with a difference'. The school was first registered in July 2010. The school closed temporarily in February 2011 for a short time and reopened with a new proprietorial partnership and headteacher in March 2011.

When the school was inspected by Ofsted in July 2011, it was judged to provide an inadequate quality of education. A significantly large number of regulations, including those in relation to the provision of education, welfare, health and safety, safeguarding and the recruitment of staff, were not met. Despite good day-to-day care of students by a caring and committed staff, the overall provision for their welfare, health and safety was inadequate. A new curriculum manager was appointed from September 2011 and there have been further changes in staffing during this term.

Context of the inspection

Following the inspection in July 2011, the school drew up and submitted an action plan to address the regulations that were not met. This was evaluated and accepted by Ofsted on 28 September 2011. This first monitoring visit was made at the request of the Department to check the progress made by the school in implementing the proposals in its 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

When the school was inspected in July 2011, it failed to meet most of the requirements relating to the quality of education. The school has implemented the proposals it made in its action plan drawn up during the summer and, while the improvements have still to be embedded, all the requirements for the curriculum, teaching and assessment are now met. Subject policies, schemes of work and appropriate plans have been drawn up and implemented, covering each of the required areas of learning. The amount of teaching time has been increased and there is now a much greater focus on developing students' skills in speaking and listening, literacy and numeracy. Courses leading to externally examined courses in English, mathematics and science, basic skills and personal development are now established, with careers education being provided through specific modules and links with a nearby centre. The needs of students with statements of special educational needs are being planned for and met through the support they receive in lessons and other activities. As a result of the improvements made in provision, students are now making satisfactory progress and are being better prepared for the next stage of their education and the world of work.

Lessons are now suitably planned to take account of students' abilities and prior knowledge and understanding. Staff are aware of students' preferred learning styles and plan lessons that engage their interest and concentration. Support staff are appropriately deployed and help students who learn at different rates to participate and succeed in learning. A wide range of strategies, including rewards and sanctions outlined in the school's new behaviour policy, are successfully used to manage students' behaviour and ensure that students sustain their learning during lessons. As a result, students are gaining new skills and knowledge and demonstrate that they are building on prior learning. The school has invested in learning resources to support the courses it is running, particularly practical games to support literacy and numeracy. Students enjoy using information and communication technology to support their learning, and lessons benefit from the use of multimedia equipment. The school has developed and implemented an assessment policy and procedures which enable staff to regularly track students' attainment and progress. This information is used to plan students' next steps in learning and also provides a basis against which the school is able to measure students' performance in externally assessed examinations.

The adoption and implementation of a planned programme for students' personal, social and health development and citizenship have helped to secure students' improved spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school now meets all the requirements in this standard. Students are responding positively to the school's new behaviour policy, taking greater responsibility for their own behaviour and being much more aware of the needs and views of others. Daily sessions where the high and low points of individual and group performance are discussed and reflected upon help students to set themselves goals for maintaining and further improving their

attitudes and behaviour. Through visits, visitors and course materials, students are developing a better understanding of public services and institutions in England, and a greater respect and understanding for their own and other cultures and faiths.

When the school was inspected in July 2011, its procedures for ensuring the welfare, health and safety of students were inadequate. The school has subsequently implemented the proposals in its action plan to address the many shortcomings identified during that inspection, and all but one of the requirements in this standard are now met. The school's recruitment procedures have been revised, and appropriate training in safer recruitment has been completed by the headteacher. The required checks are now made on all the proprietors, staff and volunteers. Staff have undertaken training in child protection procedures at the appropriate levels; the school's policy has been revised and implemented, and made available to staff, parents and carers. The school has also updated and implemented new policies relating to behaviour and the prevention of bullying which make clear the sanctions that will be used to deal with any incidents. While the school now records the action taken in dealing with any serious incidents, these records are maintained in a loose-leaf file rather than a bound book to prevent tampering. Policies for the health and safety of students on the premises and when on off-site visits have now been implemented, with appropriate risk assessments being made for routine and specific events. The school now tests fire alarms and checks equipment on a regular basis and records these, together with any fire evacuations or drills, correctly. A three-year plan for improving access to the school, information and the curriculum is now in place.

As a result of the steps taken to improve the previously inadequate arrangements for checking and recording the suitability of the proprietors, staff and volunteers, the school now meets all the requirements in this standard. The necessary checks are made with employment agencies when engaging new staff. These, and all the other required information, are now recorded on a single central record.

The previous inspection found that all but two of the requirements relating to the premises and accommodation were met. This visit found that the school now meets the requirements for providing facilities for students who are ill. However, the provision of outside space for students' recreation has not been satisfactorily resolved and the requirement remains unmet.

The information provided for parents, carers and others did not meet all the requirements when the school was inspected in July 2011. The school has since drawn up and implemented its action plan, and all the requirements are now met. All the required information for contacting the school and the proprietors is now provided on the school's new website, together with information about all the required policies, including a full copy of the school's safeguarding children's policy. The school now provides parents and carers with written reports about their children's attainment and progress, and accounting systems have been amended in order that placing local authorities can be provided with an account of income and expenditure for each student.

The school has addressed the shortcomings identified at the previous inspection in its complaints procedures. The school has placed a copy of the procedures on its website and this is accessible to parents, carers and others. The school has also amended the procedures to ensure that the findings and recommendations from a panel hearing are recorded and made available to those with a right to access this information.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

As a result of this inspection, the school must take action to meet The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010³ ('the Regulations'), as follows:

- keep written records of sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious disciplinary offences (paragraph 16)
- make appropriate arrangements for providing outside space for students to play safely (paragraph 23(s)).

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made

School details

School status	Independent
Type of school	Special School (ESBD)
Date school opened	September 2010
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Girls: 7
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Girls: 1
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Girls: 4
Number of pupils who are looked after	Girls: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£19,000
Address of school	59 Queensway, Petts Wood, Orpington, Kent BR5 1EB
Telephone number	01689 824463
Email address	thelearningcentre@hotmail.com
Headteacher	Geraldine Kane
Proprietor	Geraldine Kane and Andrew Kane