

Building Young People's Potential

Independent Special School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	875/6030
Unique Reference Number	134583
Inspection number	301502
Inspection dates	30-31 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Martyn Groucutt

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

Building Young People's Potential (BYPP) is an educational project that is a part of the Blacon Community Trust, a long-standing organisation located in north-west Chester. The project operates from three distinct sites on the estate, educating young people at Key Stage 4 and beyond. At one site it provides full-time education for 12 students who are long-term school refusers, who have been permanently excluded or who were at severe risk of permanent exclusion from mainstream education. It was this group for whom registration to operate as an independent school was granted in 2005. At another site, a programme for twelve young mothers operates, while at the third site vocational provision and life skills are offered to a further 50 students at any time on a sessional or part-time basis. 146 students in total accessed this provision during the last academic year. Students are placed in the project by a variety of organisations including the local authority, the Youth Offending Team and the Cheshire Behaviour Support Team. All the full-time students have either a statement of special educational need, or are on the School Action Plus register as a result of their challenging behaviour and 30% are long-term school refusers. None are learning English as an additional language. This is the project's first inspection report.

Evaluation of the school

The BYPP project makes good provision for education and care that includes some outstanding features. It is meeting its aim, which is, *'To engage, motivate and inspire young people who are struggling today towards brighter futures through holistic learning programmes today for a healthy tomorrow'*. The headteacher provides extremely effective leadership and the quality of teaching enables students to engage in learning and achieve success. The project complies with most of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good, with some outstanding aspects. There are three distinct parts to the overall curriculum. The first provides an 'alternative curriculum' for those Key Stage 4 students who receive full-time education. Personal, social and health education are at the centre of provision, seeking to re-engage students in learning and in participation in their wider communities as active members. Much of the work is done through a thematic approach that enables students to experience learning

across the whole curriculum and gain skills in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy. There are strong links with the Connexions service and a dedicated officer enables weekly contact with the students. The course that supports and engages teenage mothers is outstanding in supporting effective parenting, while enabling the participants to remain within an educational setting. The success of the programme is evidenced by the fact that some participants have gone on to gain places in college or university courses. The vocational studies provision has recently been further developed so that participants gain from learning a variety of vocational skills, including construction, catering and childcare, together with life skills, literacy and numeracy that address wider learning. In all elements of the curriculum the students are engaged in activities appropriate to their needs. All elements are planned carefully and the curriculum is supported by appropriate planning and schemes of work. This meets the complex social, behavioural and educational needs of students and provides access to learning across a wide spectrum of ability. Where students have a statement of special educational need, its requirements are well met by the project. However, while meeting the requirements, some elements of the curriculum are not as well developed due to a lack of expertise, such as in music and in religious education, or are hindered by lack of specialist facilities, in areas such a science.

Teaching is at least good and it is outstanding in the provision for young mothers. As a result, students are engaged and making positive steps in their learning. Teachers cater for the holistic needs of individual students and have a very good understanding of their individual strengths and weaknesses. Flexibility and an effective use of thematic approaches add interest and encourage involvement. Teaching is not only addressing the 'formal curriculum', but it is also confronting students with issues such as alcohol and drug misuse, and conflict management. Counselling and wider support to promote effective learning are strong features of the overall provision. Teachers receive professional support through lesson observations and feedback, and professional development is supported through performance management. At the moment, this does not link together personal professional development with the needs of the project as a whole. Sometimes teaching focuses too much on the input and not enough on the learning outcomes. At other times, it fails to maximise learning opportunities, or to take account of the different learning styles of students.

Individual progress is measured in a variety of ways. The 'Plus Programme' is used to plot the progress of individual students monthly in literacy and numeracy from a baseline assessment on entry to the project. This highlights individual areas of strengths and areas for development that are used to inform individual learning. All students have individual education plans which record targets that are reviewed monthly and amended as appropriate. There are a range of opportunities for gaining external accreditation, including GCSE in English and mathematics, and awards from the Awards Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN), the Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR) and the Northern Council for Further Education (NCFE). In the last academic year, all except one student gained some form of accreditation, since opportunities exist to enter for qualifications that cater

for the whole spectrum of academic ability that is represented in the student body. This reflects the overall success of the project; students make good progress in their learning.

Students say that they can see and feel the progress which they are making – they are engaged in education, many for the first time since early childhood. They feel that they are achieving and, as a result, those who had previously dropped out of the mainstream schooling are beginning to appreciate the value of education.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and their behaviour is good. The development of self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence is at the heart of much of the work of the project. Students, most of whom had struggled previously with their education and had experienced multiple disadvantages, are re-engaging with the learning process. Staff provide very constructive role models and focus on promoting positive attitudes. There are clear rules on what is acceptable and what is not. Since many students have a history of offending or are at social risk, this is an important aspect of the educational provision. Personal development is key to the ethos of the project. This, together with the importance of community life, is stressed in the teaching. Consequently, students gain a broad knowledge of public institutions, and also a good understanding of how important it is for individuals to play a positive role within their community. Issues around racism and developing positive attitudes to members of other religions, races and ethnic groups have been tackled with determination and success, as evidenced by displays of work on respect.

Students say that they enjoy being part of the project. This is reflected in parents' and students' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires, the marked improvement in students' attendance, behaviour and general attitudes, and students' ability to talk about these changes in their lives. Whilst attendance overall remains below the national average it is a measure of the success of the project that it re-engages in learning, students, a third of whom were non-attenders in mainstream schools. The Education Officer of the Youth Offending Team said, '*the provision is priceless*'.

Students' future economic well-being and their opportunities to make a positive contribution are addressed effectively in a variety of ways that allow students to participate. One outstanding example is the peer support group operated by the young mothers' group. Students speak with other teenagers about motherhood, safe sex and relationships, and have also spoken to professional Youth Workers about their role in helping develop mature approaches to sex and relationships. Another is the way in which vocational course students have built a range of new facilities to support the work of BYPP and the Blacon Community Trust, which has developed their practical skills, as well as helping them contribute to the community.

Welfare, health and safety of the students

Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good. High levels of care, support and guidance, together with effective mentoring, have a positive impact on students. Students say that they feel safe and the project provides a refuge from the experiences of violence and instability that they have experienced elsewhere in their lives. Staff receive training in child protection and procedures are well understood by students and staff. Students report that bullying is dealt with effectively. Policies for minimising risks are in place and understood. Sanctions and exclusions are recorded appropriately, and admission and attendance registers are maintained properly. Good health, both physical and emotional, is well supported.

The school complies with its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Nearly all the checks required on staff prior to confirmation of their employment are carried out. However, their medical fitness is not verified. A single central register recording all the checks made has been compiled to enable managers to implement the updated recruitment procedures robustly.

School's premises and accommodation

The three sites are all maintained to a good standard. This creates a good environment for teaching and learning – in part created through the efforts of students who undertake construction work and who have added to the facilities. However, at the base for vocational courses there are currently no facilities for students who are taken ill, in contravention of the appropriate regulation.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information is good. Monthly updates on students' progress are provided to parents, carers and placing organisations, in addition to formal annual reports. Parents and carers showed a very positive response towards the project in their responses to the inspection questionnaire

Procedures for handling complaints

There are suitable procedures for dealing with complaints, written in clear and understandable language and available on request. However, the requirement to keep anything set down in writing confidential is not stated.

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 suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff, ensure that appropriate checks have been carried out to confirm their medical fitness and that such information has been taken into account in determining whether their appointment will be confirmed (paragraph 4(2)(a)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide appropriate facilities for students who are ill, in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(l)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of procedures for handling complaints (standard 7) and must:

- ensure that the procedure provides that correspondence, statements and records of complaints are to be kept confidential (paragraph 7(k)).

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 the performance management system to link more closely with lesson observations and professional development/training to best meet the needs of individual staff and the needs of the project as a whole
- further develop links with schools and organisations that place students at the project, and strengthen ways in which skills and specialist facilities can be shared
- provide opportunities to further develop the teaching skills of staff who are not qualified teachers, focussing on developing an understanding of learning outcomes and learning styles.

School details

Name of school	Building Young People's Potential		
DCSF number	875/6030		
Unique reference number	134583		
Type of school	Day special school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	February 2002 (registered as an independent school in 2005)		
Age range of students	14-18 years		
Gender of students	Mixed		
Number on roll	Boys: 8	Girls: 4	Total: 12
Number of students with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 2	Girls: 1	Total: 3
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Annual fees	£5875 (basic cost)		
Address of school	Dee Point Centre Blacon Point Road Chester Cheshire CH1 5NF		
Telephone number	01244 371716		
Fax number	01244 380248		
Email address	lou@bypp.org.uk		
Headteacher	Ms Louise Davey		
Proprietor	Blacon Community Trust		
Reporting inspector	Martyn Groucutt AI		
Dates of inspection	30-31 January 2008		