

Engaging Potential

Progress House, 79 Gaywood Drive, Newbury, RG14 2PR

Inspection dates

8–10 July 2014

Overall effectiveness

Good

2

Achievement of pupils

Good

2

Quality of teaching

Good

2

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Good

2

Leadership and management

Good

2

Summary of key findings

This is a good school

- Students make good progress with their learning, mostly from starting points which are below the average for their ages.
- The school provides intensive, successful learning programmes, including high levels of challenge through one-to-one teaching and mentoring.
- A large majority of students develop positive attitudes to learning and willingly take an active part in activities provided for them. Parents and carers express extremely positive views about the school and what it has achieved for their children.
- Students demonstrate rapid improvements in their behaviour once settled into the school.
- The school provides a creative and effective programme of subjects and activities, carefully tailored to the needs of each student.
- The quality of leadership and management is good. The proprietor and senior staff have established a safe environment for learning, in which all risks are carefully assessed and minimised.
- The school's leaders and managers have, in a short time since the school opened, ensured that the quality of teaching is having a positive impact on students' achievement and preparation for their future lives.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students who start at the school with reduced timetables are not always moved quickly enough on to full-time programmes.
- The school's provision for the cultural development of students does not provide each student with a consistent understanding of diverse cultures in British society.
- A small number of students have poor attendance and do not take part sufficiently in the opportunities provided by the school.
- The school's view of how well it is doing and the annual report on its performance do not focus sufficiently on the extent of students' progress compared with national averages.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was conducted with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed nine lessons taught by six members of staff, including two off-site activities. He had discussions with the proprietor, members of the senior management team, a number of members of staff and students.
- Questionnaires submitted by eight members of staff and 11 parents and carers were considered. Telephone conversations were held with two alternative providers used by the school and with a representative of the placing local authority.
- A number of school policy documents, data about students' achievement and attendance, and samples of students' work were scrutinised.

Inspection team

David Young, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Engaging Potential is a day special school providing education for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Some students have autistic spectrum disorders or related conditions.
- The school is located in Newbury, in premises recently refurbished to accommodate the school. Students are placed at the school under a contract with West Berkshire local authority.
- The school opened as a registered independent school in June 2013, to admit up to 14 boys and girls in the age range 13 to 19 years. There are currently 14 students on roll aged from 14 to 17 years, 13 of whom have a statement of special educational needs.
- The mission statement for the school states the aim to 're-engage students with learning and positive life experiences through mentoring, individual learning opportunities and social development'.
- The proprietor, who is also the head of the school, leads the senior management team. There are no middle leaders and no governing body or management board.
- Much of the school's provision takes place off site, with mentors working individually with students. In addition, the school uses the services of alternative providers such as Upper Lodge Farm and The Outdoor Academy, together with work experience placements with local employers.
- This is the school's first Ofsted inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all students who start at the school with reduced learning programmes are moved rapidly on to full-time learning.
- Ensure that all students are provided with experiences which enable them to develop a consistent understanding of the diversity of beliefs and cultures in British society.
- Further develop arrangements to improve the attendance and involvement of the small number of persistent absentees.
- Ensure that the school's evaluation of its performance and its annual report:
 - take full account of the extent of students' progress from their various starting points, compared with national averages
 - includes an independent, external check on the school's progress and success.
- Ensure that all staff, including mentors, have a common understanding of how students' progress compares with national averages.

Inspection judgements

Achievement of pupils

Good

- The achievement of students is good as a result of good teaching and mentoring and the range of learning activities provided for them.
- A large majority of students enter the school with levels of attainment which are below average for their age as a result of disruptions to their previous education, often including persistent absence. Once they have settled into the expectations of the school, most make good progress from their various starting points.
- Students' progress in English and mathematics is good; the students rapidly begin to catch up with gaps in their previous education. In the short time since the school registered as an independent school, students' rates of progress in these core subjects are at least in line with national expectations; a number of students have exceeded these expectations.
- The school has not been operating for long enough to judge whether these rates of progress will be sustained over time.
- Improvements in self-confidence, attendance and attitudes to learning, for the majority of students, make a positive contribution to the quality of their academic achievement.
- Students achieve a wide range of externally accredited qualifications, suited to their current levels of learning. They have achieved success in a number of unit awards and functional skills certificates, ranging between Entry level and level 2 qualifications, in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). Students are currently working towards similar qualifications in science. The school is successful in ensuring that students of all abilities and backgrounds have an equal opportunity to succeed.
- Higher ability students benefit from the timetables which are tailored to meet their needs. A small number of students are studying for GCSE examinations in English, mathematics, and science. The flexibility of the school's timetabling arrangements ensures that any student can be entered for any subject studied at an appropriate level.
- The breadth and richness of the courses studied have enabled students to achieve additional qualifications in subjects as diverse as the Arts Award, citizenship, food technology, first aid, music technology and physical education (PE).
- The alternative provisions used by the school make a strong contribution to the development of students' skills and their motivation. These providers enable students to gain additional qualifications, for example in horticulture and outdoor education.
- Almost all students have a statement of special educational needs. Good account is taken of the aims identified in their statements to create realistic targets for each student, resulting in appropriate qualifications.
- The small number of post-16 students is provided with appropriate opportunities to continue their studies in a range of subjects and to complete their accreditations in preparation for employment or courses in further education colleges.
- The small number of students leaving the school this summer has secured places in employment or further education.

Quality of teaching

Good

- The quality of teaching is good and enables students with a history of failure to make good progress in their academic learning and personal development.
- Each student experiences a personal timetable of teaching and mentorship. Throughout their working day, students take part in intensive one-to-one activities which challenge them well and match their individual learning needs. The effective integration of teaching and mentorship is achieved through high-quality leadership of both elements, supported extremely well by daily briefing sessions involving all staff.

- A full-time programme of subjects and activities is available for each student. Most students are integrated gradually into full-time attendance. However, for some, this integration is not sufficiently rapid and demanding.
- All members of staff have an excellent awareness of the personal characteristics of the students with whom they work. Classroom learning activities, for example in English, mathematics and science, build appropriately on students' previous learning. Learning mentors provide good support for learning in the classroom; there are no additional teaching assistants.
- The one-to-one nature of the teaching results in a high quality of dialogue and questioning by teachers. Students, for example, learn about Pythagoras' theorem, how to test for protein in foods, or about the characters in the novel *Of Mice and Men*. In each case, the member of staff working with the student has a clear understanding of the student's personal confidence and previous learning. As a result, students have respect for the staff and are willing to make their own contributions to effective learning.
- Similarly, students work alongside their personal mentors and tutors on practical or off-site activities, such as exploring their self-image in art, baking raspberry muffins, developing golf skills, or geocaching on Greenham Common. Each activity is used sensitively to develop practical, social and life skills in combination.
- The use of a wide range of external accreditation at a variety of levels provides students with the motivation to complete tasks and a sense of achievement in their awards. The range of accreditation gained, when students work with external providers, indicates the valuable contribution made by these courses to students' life experiences.
- The assessment of students' work is accurate, based on National Curriculum levels or levels in the National Qualifications Framework. The staff use this information effectively to plan future learning, but not all staff members have sufficient knowledge of how students' attainment and rates of progress compare with national expectations.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Good

- The behaviour of students is good and contributes positively to their learning and progress. All the regulatory requirements for students' welfare, health and safety are met.
- Students demonstrate strong improvements in those attitudes to learning which have held them back in previous placements. A large majority of students take their work seriously and cooperate well with their teachers and mentors.
- The school's records show a reduction in the number of incidents of poor behaviour. Parents and carers, who responded to the inspection questionnaire, expressed very positive views about the behaviour and safety of students. They state unanimously that they would recommend this school to others.
- Each student is provided with a personal mentor and these relationships have an outstandingly positive impact on students' attitudes to adults, their self-awareness and their ability to behave in a socially acceptable manner.
- Recent developments in the assessment and recording of students' emotional and social development, and their ability to manage their attitudes and behaviour, are successful. They have provided the staff with appropriate language and structure to guide their conversations with individual students.
- No parent, carer or student expressed concern about bullying. The school's records demonstrate good success in resolving any incidents of breakdown in relationships between students.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Each student works under individual supervision at all times and the mentorship programme provides them with excellent opportunities to reflect on their lifestyles, risk-taking behaviours and how to live healthily. All procedures related to the safe recruitment of staff, training staff in child protection, and all requirements for fire safety are implemented to a high standard.
- Overall attendance is below the national average, but shows good improvement from students' attendance at previous placements. A small number of persistent absentees do not benefit

sufficiently from the learning activities provided for them. The school has extensive arrangements in place to improve attendance, including excellent relationships with most parents and carers; but attendance for this minority does not improve quickly enough.

- The school makes good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. They are provided with good opportunities to learn about, and contribute to, the local and wider community. They have taken part in collections for charities and have visited places of local historic, environmental and civic significance, including Greenham Common, local museums and Upper Lodge Farm.
- Appropriate opportunities are taken, through the subjects taught and individual work with students, to counter racist views and to provide some insights into cultural diversity. Festivals, including Chinese New Year and American Independence Day, are celebrated. However, there is not a well organised programme for all students which helps them develop understanding and respect for the diversity of major faiths and cultures in Britain today.
- Students are provided with good opportunities to understand the values of democracy and the rule of law through the citizenship units in the Preparation for Working Life certificate. Recent themes have included the study of Scottish independence and the European elections. The school's use of alternative provisions makes a strong contribution to the development of students' social skills, and their ability to accept responsibility and to work together with others.
- The school's staff handbook presents a clear expectation that any controversial political issues will be addressed in a balanced and non-partisan manner.

Leadership and management

Good

- The quality of leadership and management is good and has ensured that, in a short time since the school opened, students' achievements and their personal development are at the heart of the school's aims and success.
- The proprietor, who is also the head of the school, works effectively with the senior management team to ensure that students' achievement, behaviour and personal development are managed effectively. Together, they have ensured that all the independent school regulations are met. The school's policies and procedures for all the school's areas of responsibility are robust and checked regularly.
- Senior leaders have a good understanding of the school's relative strengths and areas for improvement. Systems for making checks on teaching, students' achievement and behaviour, are evident in the school's annual report, which is shared with the placing authority. There are no additional procedures in place for an external, independent check on the school's progress and success.
- Students' achievement of accreditation certificates is ratified externally and the school's education manager has a good understanding of how students' progress and attainment compare with national averages. However, this understanding is not shared consistently across all staff working with the students and is not a strong feature of the school's annual report.
- Senior leaders have appropriate arrangements for the regular review of the performance of staff and robust arrangements are in place to ensure that all mandatory training takes place to the required timescales.
- The staff, ably led by the head of the school, have excellent working relationships with the majority of parents and carers; any concerns expressed by students, parents or carers are quickly resolved.
- The school's leaders and managers have demonstrated the capacity to tackle further improvement, as identified in the school improvement plan.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053.

School details

Unique reference number	139963
Inspection number	443020
DfE registration number	869/6017

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Day special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	13–19 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	14
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Tracy Watson
Headteacher	Tracy Watson
Date of previous school inspection	Not applicable
Annual fees (day pupils)	£31,437
Telephone number	01635 524113
Email address	tracy@engagingpotential.com

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

