

# TLC – The Learning Centre

Independent special school standard 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, 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.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## 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 eight girls on roll aged between 12 and 15 years, three 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, 'to 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. This is the school's first inspection.

## Evaluation of the school

The quality of education provided by TLC, the Learning Centre, is inadequate and it does not meet its aims of providing a tailored education. Both the curriculum and quality of teaching are inadequate so that students' academic progress, behaviour and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are also inadequate. The school does not meet a significant number of the regulations, including those in relation to the provision of education, welfare, health and safety, safeguarding and the recruitment of staff. Despite good day-to-day care of students by a caring and committed staff, overall provision for their welfare, health and safety is inadequate.

## Quality of education

The curriculum is inadequate. The length of the school day is too short and schemes of work are not sufficiently developed for students to have enough opportunities to achieve success both in their academic and personal development, and to reverse the often poor attitudes to learning and/or gaps in their education from their previous schools. The curriculum is based around National Curriculum subjects but

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

does not provide sufficient breadth for all students or to meet the requirements of statements of special educational needs. For example there is no teaching of a modern foreign language or history. A small group of younger students have recently started swimming lessons but there is currently no provision for physical education for older students. Visiting speakers have been used, with some positive effect, to support students' personal, social and health education (PSHE). There have been no opportunities to enhance the curriculum, for example through visits or trips, and this limits students' learning experiences and aspirations. Students' personal development is seen as paramount but, at the current time, this is not sufficiently underpinned by the different aspects of the curriculum. However, the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network and entry level certificates are being introduced to broaden students' experiences and provide opportunities for formal accreditation. The school states that it provides access to GCSEs but most teaching, including that of Key Stage 4 students, is aligned to the Key Stage 3 curriculum. While there are appropriate opportunities for learning in English, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT), there is no systematic approach to developing students' basic skills, notably in literacy or wider skills such as teamwork. There is currently no access to work experience, careers advice or vocational courses to broaden students' experiences and prepare them for the next steps of their education.

Teaching and assessment are inadequate. Most teachers are recent appointments and there are some developing strengths in teaching. For example, teachers have good subject knowledge and are highly committed to doing the best for their students. However, their management of any challenging behaviour is inconsistent because it is not underpinned by clear guidance from the school's policies. As a result, teaching is often slow to start, learning is too often disrupted or students refuse to participate in lessons. Teachers are reasonably skilled in adapting lessons to meet the needs of the differing abilities, although this has not necessarily been planned for in advance. There is some variety in approaches to teaching to try and motivate students to learn. However, lessons tend to be very teacher-led and there are too few resources. Learning is not routinely set in a context to enable students to see the value of education for their future lives and so improve their attitudes to learning. Students are reasonably confident users of ICT but opportunities are missed to use ICT as a tool to engage students and promote learning. For example, no use of the interactive whiteboard was seen. Evaluation of progress tends to be linked to the amount of work done and not to what the students have learned. There is some evidence of marking in students' books, but very few comments were seen which explained how to improve.

Students' attainment is not assessed on entry. There is very limited regular assessment of students' levels in order to track their attainment and progress against National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades or other accredited courses. All students have individual education and behaviour plans. While broad targets are set, the strategies for reaching them are brief and lack specific guidance to support students' academic and personal development sufficiently. They routinely used in planning or

teaching. Evidence from books and lessons shows that while the progress made by students in mathematics is satisfactory, overall it is inadequate, and they are not sufficiently prepared for adult life or the next steps of their education.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is inadequate. Students have good relationships with staff which help foster a sense of belonging and build self-esteem. While most students say they want to continue coming to the school, this is not reflected in their poor attitudes to learning and inadequate behaviour. The expectations for students' behaviour and approach to their studies are too low and school routines and boundaries are not rigorously reinforced. There is no systematic approach to students' social and moral development and, too often, minor incidents of misbehaviour are not dealt with consistently by staff. Opportunities are missed throughout the day and in end-of-day reflection sessions for students to become self-aware and recognise that their behaviour has been inappropriate both now and in the past. Attendance is variable with some students attending very regularly but for others, it is poor. There are too few opportunities for students to take on responsibilities or make a contribution to the school and wider community, although one older student acts as a mentor to younger ones and this is contributing well to her personal development. Students have limited appreciation of cultural and religious diversity and they do not gain a sufficient understanding of public institutions and services in England. Opportunities for spiritual development, such as appreciating the arts or the world around them, are also very limited.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

Provision for the students' welfare, health and safety and their safeguarding is inadequate. On a day-to-day basis, staff are committed and vigilant, providing appropriate support and supervision. Most students say that they feel safe and they are confident that if any bullying occurs or other concerns arise they would be dealt with very effectively. Nevertheless, the school's behaviour and anti-bullying policies do not provide a clear framework for sanctions, in particular in relation to minor issues or low-level disruption. Accidents and any serious incidents of poor behaviour are recorded. However, the actions taken and sanctions imposed are not always logged and there is no analysis to ensure that any concerning trends are addressed. Admissions to the school and attendance are carefully recorded.

A health and safety policy has been written but not implemented fully. For example, there are very few risk assessments in place in relation to health and safety, although an individual risk assessment is made on each student on admission. The school is beginning to develop procedures for ensuring students' safety on educational visits, following recent training, but these are not yet operational. A fire risk assessment was carried out by outside professionals in July 2010 prior to the school opening. Many of the concerns raised have been addressed. However, the fire extinguishers have not been serviced, although testing of electric equipment and the

fire alarm and lighting has been undertaken. Despite the risk level identified in the fire risk assessment, no evacuation risk assessments have been made, no fire drills have been undertaken, and, beyond the headteacher, staff have not been trained in the use of fire equipment.

The child protection policy meets basic guidelines, but some aspects lack sufficient detail, for example on how students will be taught to stay safe. Although the school has endeavoured to follow current government safeguarding guidelines, there is no policy or written procedures in place for the safe recruitment of staff. The school has not been sufficiently rigorous in checking and recording references and making the relevant checks for some staff, including those from agencies, in relation to their suitability to work with children. The headteacher has undertaken the required higher level training in child protection. Other staff had not received the required training at the start of the inspection but this has now been booked. Students are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles through, for example, discussions on healthy eating and visiting speakers who cover topics such as drug and alcohol abuse and personal safety but access to physical exercise is very recent. While there are policies to promote equality and disability, there is no suitable three-year action plan indicating how the school will fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

### **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

The school is not sufficiently rigorous in ensuring that its staff, including those provided by agencies, are suitable to work with children. At the start of the inspection the required single central register was not in place.

### **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The school is housed in former offices on the first floor of a block of shops. While the accommodation is small, it is appropriately-sized for the eight students and provides a suitable learning environment. It consists of one large classroom which is equipped with an interactive whiteboard, a small practical room used for food technology, a reasonably well-equipped ICT room and a comfortable 'chill-out' room. There is also a very small kitchen and office for staff. Toilet arrangements are adequate but the 'chill-out' room which is currently used for students who feel unwell does not meet regulations because no sink is installed. There is no recreational outdoor space and no alternative provision is currently made for students at break and lunchtimes beyond a short visit to the local supermarket to select food.

### **Provision of information**

The school provides parents and prospective parents with some basic information, including some details of the curriculum and school ethos, through its prospectus and website. However, parents and carers are not provided with, or informed about, the key policies, and the out-of-hours contact details are not currently published. There is regular contact with parents and carers, the placing schools and the local

authority regarding students' attendance, behaviour and well-being. However, the school has yet to set up a regular reporting system to provide parents and carers with information on students' current attainment and progress. There are no arrangements in place to provide the local authority with an annual statement of account in respect of the students they have placed there.

## **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The school has a complaints policy which meets most requirements. Parents are currently not made aware of the policy.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the quality of education provided (standards in part 1) and must:

- provide and implement curriculum policies, plans and schemes of work for all areas of learning (paragraph 2(1))
- ensure the curriculum gives pupils of compulsory school age a full-time education and that there is sufficient coverage of the human and social and physical aspects of the curriculum (paragraph 2(2)(a))
- ensure that the curriculum enables pupils to acquire skills in speaking, listening and literacy (paragraph 2(2)(c))
- ensure that where pupils have a statement of special educational needs the education provided fulfils its requirements (paragraph 2(2)(e))
- make provision for appropriate careers guidance for all pupils (paragraph 2(2)(g))
- provide sufficient opportunities for all pupils to learn and make progress (paragraph 2(2)(i))
- provide adequate preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life (paragraph 2(2)(j))
- ensure that teaching enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught (paragraph 3(a))
- ensure that teaching involves well-planned lessons, effective teaching methods, suitable activities and appropriate management of class time (paragraph 3(c))
- ensure that classroom resources are of adequate quality, quantity and range and are used effectively (paragraph 3(f))
- develop a framework to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly, and use information from such assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress (paragraph 3(g))
- ensure that teaching utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly (paragraph 3(h))
- put in place a framework by which pupils' performance can be evaluated by reference to either the school's own aims, as provided to parents, and/or by national norms (paragraph 4).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils (standards in part 2) and must:

- encourage all pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative, and understand how they can contribute to community life (paragraph 5(c))
- make provision to give pupils a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England (paragraph 5(d))
- ensure pupils acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures, in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions (paragraph 5(e)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

- prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and ensure these arrangements have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 7)
- prepare and implement a written policy to promote good behaviour among pupils which sets out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving, and ensure this policy is implemented effectively (paragraph 9)
- prepare and implement a written policy to prevent bullying which has regard to the DCSF guidance Safe to learn: embedding anti-bullying work in schools (DCSF-00656-2007) (paragraph 10)
- prepare and implement effective measures to ensure pupils' health and safety which have regard to the DfES guidance Health and safety: responsibilities and powers (DfES 0803/2001) (paragraph 11)
- prepare and implement effective procedures for ensuring pupils' health and safety on educational visits which have regard to DfES guidance Health and safety of pupils on educational visits (DfES ref:HSPV2) (paragraph 12)
- comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005/3 (paragraph 13)
- keep written records of sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious disciplinary offences (paragraph 16).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors (standards in part 4) and must:

- verify that no member of staff is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (ISA barred list) or carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of any direction made under section 142 of the

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<sup>3</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2005/20051541.htm](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2005/20051541.htm)



- 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction (a List 99 check) (paragraph 19(2)(a))
- ensure that a person offered for supply by an employment business to the school only begins to work at the school after receiving written notification of the required checks including the date each check was completed or certificate obtained and that a copy of the enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) certificate was obtained by the employment business before the person was due to begin work (paragraph 20(2)(a))
  - ensure that before they start work at the school, the person offered for supply by the employment business is suitable for the work required (paragraph 20(2)(b))
  - ensure that the identity of any staff not directly employed by the school is checked before they begin work at the school irrespective of any check made by the employment business (paragraph 20(2)(c))
  - ensure that any contractual arrangements with an employment business include the requirements set out in paragraphs 20(2)(a), including a requirement to supply a copy of a CRB certificate that contains any disclosures (paragraph 20(2)(d))
  - ensure that no member of the proprietorial body is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (ISA barred list), or does not carry out or intend to carry out work at the school in contravention of any direction made under section 142 of the 2002 Act in respect of that person (List 99), or disqualification prohibition or restriction having the same effect (paragraph 21(6)(a))
  - check the identity and right to work in the United Kingdom of other members of the proprietorial body and carry out enhanced CRB checks (paragraph 21(6)(b))
  - compile a single central register that shows all the appropriate checks, including the date on which each check was completed or the certificate obtained, for members of staff and the checks for members of the proprietorial body, and the notification of checks for staff not employed directly by the school (paragraphs 2(2), 22(3), 22(5) and 22(6)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises of and accommodation at schools (standards in part 5) and must:

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, in accordance with regulation 5 of the education (school premises) regulations 1999 (paragraph 23(k))
- make appropriate arrangements for providing outside space for pupils to play safely (paragraph 23(s)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- make available to parents and carers of pupils and parents and carers of prospective pupils, a telephone number or numbers on which the proprietors may be contacted at all times (paragraph 24(1)(a))
- make available to parents and carers of pupils and parents and carers of prospective pupils: particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for admissions, discipline and exclusions; particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs and for pupils for whom English is an additional language; particulars of the curriculum policy of the school; particulars of policies relating to bullying, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour, and sanctions adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving; particulars of the arrangements for tackling bullying, and for promoting pupils' health and safety on the school premises and on educational visits; details of the complaints procedure adopted by the school, together with details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 24(1)(b))
- publish the school's the safeguarding children policy (as required under part 3, paragraph 7) on the school's website, or send a copy to parents and carers of pupils, and of prospective pupils, on request (paragraph 24(1)(c))
- provide parents and carers with an annual written report of the progress and attainment of each registered child in the main subject areas taught (paragraph 24(1)(f))
- ensure that an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of any pupils placed by a local authority is submitted to the local authority and on request to the Secretary of State (paragraph 24(1)(h)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the manner in which complaints are to be handled (standards in part 7) and must:

- ensure the complaints procedure is made available to parents and carers (paragraph 25(b))
- amend the complaints procedure so it provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulate that a copy of the findings and recommendations is sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about (paragraph 25(i)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001, the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/ukpga\\_19950050\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/ukpga_19950050_en_1)

## Inspection judgements

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

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils				✓
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## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Special school		
<b>Date school opened</b>	September 2010		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 8	Total: 8
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	0
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 3	Total: 3
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£60,450 to £63,375		
<b>Address of school</b>	59 Queensway, Petts Wood Orpington, Kent BR5 1EB		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01689 824463		
<b>Email address</b>	thelearningcetnre@hotmail.co.uk		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Geraldine Kane		
<b>Proprietors</b>	Mrs Geraldine Kane and Mr Andrew Kane		