

Black Country Wheels

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Anthony O'Malley

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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.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Black Country Wheels is an independent special day school for young people aged between 14 and 16 years with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. It is situated in a refurbished unit in a small industrial estate in Tipton, Dudley. It opened in September 2011. All students have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools or are at risk of exclusion. In all cases their previous education has been disrupted significantly. Students are placed by Dudley local authority or referred directly by local schools. The school is registered for 20 students and is over-subscribed. Five students have a statement for special educational needs. The school aims for every student to receive a positive experience in their final school years. It provides a curriculum model based upon personal development and employability skills, providing opportunities for students to be self-aware and to learn life skills that will help them manage their work, lives and relationships. The proprietorial body is Black Country Wheels. Black Country Wheels has been providing alternative education in Dudley since 1999. This is the school's first inspection since its registration as an independent school.

Evaluation of the school

Black Country Wheels provides a satisfactory quality of education for its students. Teaching and assessment and the curriculum are satisfactory. The school successfully meets its aims in re-engaging students with their learning and increasing their self-esteem. Students' behaviour and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Provision to ensure students' welfare, health and safety is good and safeguarding requirements are fully met. All regulatory requirements are met.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory. Students apply for a place at Black Country Wheels because it provides a programme of study leading to a Level 1 diploma in Light Vehicle Maintenance. Daily sessions in the well-resourced workroom enable students to experience and gain skills in all aspects of vehicle maintenance, including associated health and safety issues. Meticulous planning and regular assessment ensure skills are built progressively. The workshop and linked classroom sessions prepare students well for post-16 vocational training in the motor industry, and the great majority of students pursue this route when they leave Black Country Wheels. Other areas of the curriculum are less well-established. Nevertheless, schemes of work are sufficient and suitably support lesson planning. Consequently, through English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education (PHSE) lessons students develop satisfactorily the skills, knowledge and experiences essential for their futures. Work in students' folders and on display around the building demonstrates how students learn about diversity and art, and reflect on moral issues. A strong partnership with the local health team ensures that the curriculum covers issues such as smoking cessation, drug awareness, sexual health and personal relationships. All students participate in physical activities and a sports leadership course is offered. The extra-curricular programme provides opportunities for students to work collaboratively and develop their social skills. Students are prepared suitably for the next stage of their education or working life through regular careers advice and support in applying for work and college courses. The curriculum takes satisfactory account of the needs of those who have a statement of special educational need. The local authority is developing effective links with the school to ensure that the curriculum is tailored appropriately to address the individual needs of these students. For example, an officer from the local authority works in the school for a half day every week.

While favouring their motor vehicle work, six students interviewed individually all commented that they enjoy the rest of the curriculum and are confident that they are making more progress than in the past. They are proud to share their work, reflecting the success the curriculum has in building confidence and motivation. Similarly, two former students spoke enthusiastically of the Presentation Evening they attended in the summer to receive their Level 1 awards in Functional English and Functional Mathematics and a Healthy Eating certificate. Currently, however, the range of opportunities for students to gain qualifications that accredit their skills for learning, skills for employment and skills for life is too narrow.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory and students make satisfactory progress. The strongest teaching and learning occur in the motor vehicle workshop, reflecting the high level of subject knowledge of the staff, the good range of vehicles for students to work on and the students' own preference for practical learning. This level of expertise and high quality of resources is not found consistently in other lessons. Features leading to satisfactory rather than good progress in lessons include setting all pupils the same task regardless of their earlier learning, explanations and questioning that focus on methods and answers rather

than on deepening the students' understanding of topics and too much time being spent by students copying notes and examples.

Staff and students use information and communication technology well in English and PHSE to support learning. Additional support is deployed thoughtfully during lessons to assist students with special educational needs and to deal with momentary lapses in behaviour so that learning for others is uninterrupted. Parents and carers and the placing authority commented very positively in meetings and in questionnaire responses about the progress students are making at the school. All those who left the school last year continued into further education, training or employment.

Assessment practices are satisfactory. Each student is assessed on entry to establish their individual starting points. Thereafter their progress is tracked regularly and their progress towards their targets evaluated. However, students are not clear about which precise literacy or numeracy skills they are trying to achieve this term and marking of their work does not always point out exactly what learning objectives they have achieved and what their next steps should be.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The students' behaviour is good overall and although for a few it remains unpredictable with lapses in conduct, those who know the students best are full of praise for the 'remarkable work' of the staff. During the inspection 10 parents and carers described how Black Country Wheels had transformed the lives of their children and families. In a separate meeting, a local teacher spoke of how he has been 'astounded' and 'amazed' by the change in attitudes demonstrated by students placed at the Black Country Wheels. All students now attend school much more regularly than in the past, with four of them having 100% attendance this year. These improvements are due to the strong emphasis placed on promoting the students' ability to reflect upon, and consequently learn how to manage, their own behaviour. A key feature is the tutorial sessions where students share how they are feeling and any issues that may have arisen outside school. In these and other daily discussions, tolerance and respect are expressly modelled and taught by staff. Students in discussions and through their questionnaires emphasised that one of the most important features of this school is that it makes them feel safe and that there is no bullying. The students' personal development is also enriched through visits to the library, local places of historical interest, places of worship, museums and art galleries.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of students is good. These feature prominently in the school's priorities. Students report that they are confident that staff will always step in quickly to resolve any difficulties that arise. Good use is

made of professional agencies to provide specific support and expert advice on attendance, future pathways and health matters. The school's policy for safeguarding is robust and meets requirements fully. The designated person for child protection ensures that all staff are trained to the required level and their training is up to date. Similarly, the headteacher is very experienced and confident in the use of the Common Assessment Framework. The school works closely with families and other professional agencies to ensure that information is shared on issues linked to a student's well-being. Staff are also trained appropriately in first aid and there are sufficient first aiders on site at all times. Fire drills and checks of fire systems and electrical equipment are regular and documented carefully.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school carries out all of the required checks on the suitability of staff and proprietors prior to their appointment and maintains a single central register in line with requirements.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The accommodation provides a safe and effective environment for learning. The motor vehicle workroom is spacious and very well equipped. All classrooms are clean, bright and tidy. The building is maintained to an appropriate standard. The kitchen is small and the school does not provide hot meals for the students other than toast. Students have access to a small outdoor area which has a seating area for them to socialise and enjoy recreation. They travel by minibus to a local park for sporting activities. The school has a purpose-built medical room for students who become ill. Washrooms meet requirements.

Provision of information

The provision of information for parents, carers and others is clear, accurate and up to date, and all receive the required information. The school communicates effectively with parents, carers, external professionals and the local authority. Parents and carers are kept up to date with their children's academic progress, attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning, through regular contact. They receive a helpful report of their children's academic progress and their personal development and well-being every term.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a comprehensive and fair complaints procedure which meets requirements. No complaints have been received since the school opened.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Improve consistency in the quality of teaching so that is good and outstanding across the full range of subjects.
- Improve the quality of marking and the use of targets so that students are clear about their learning goals and how they can achieve them.
- Increase the opportunities for students to gain qualifications that accredit their skills for learning, for employment and skills for life.

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

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Day school for students with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties		
Date school opened	12 October 2011		
Age range of pupils	14–16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 20	Girls: 0	Total: 20
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 5	Girls: 0	Total: 5
Annual fees (day pupils)	£9600		
Address of school	Unit 25, Coneygre Trading Estate Tipton DY4 8XP		
Telephone number	0121 5223717		
Email address	jlbcw@hotmail.co.uk		
Headteacher	Jan Lear		
Proprietor	Jan Lear		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



4 October 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Black Country Wheels, Tipton, DY4 8XP

Thank you for being so friendly when I inspected your school. I enjoyed my visit, particularly the opportunity to see you at work in the motor vehicle workroom, and to meet with you and so many of your parents. The inspection found that Black Country Wheels provides you with a satisfactory quality of education. It has many strengths and these are helping you manage your behaviour well, make good progress learning about motor vehicle maintenance and also achieve qualifications in English, mathematics and Healthy Eating. The school meets all government requirements for independent schools. I was particularly pleased to find that:

- in lessons, you take an active part and work well
- you have good relationships with adults who teach you
- your parents are pleased and proud with what you are achieving
- you feel safe in school and there is no bullying
- you are attending school much more regularly than in the past.

The adults in your school are keen to keep on improving things. To help them I have asked them to consider how they can:

- make sure all lessons are as good as those linked with motor vehicle maintenance
- improve the quality of marking and the use of targets so that you are clear about your learning goals and how you can achieve them
- increase the opportunities you have to gain qualifications that will help you obtain places on training courses and find jobs in the future.

Yours sincerely

Anthony O'Malley
Her Majesty's Inspector

