

# Assess Education

Bilalil House, 260 Picton Road, Wavertree, Liverpool, L15 4LP

<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–10 October 2013	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### This school is good because

- Although students arrive having lost the confidence to attend school regularly and contribute to lessons, following their enrolment at the school most students return successfully to full-time education.
- Through good teaching students achieve well, catching up with previously lost learning. Their starting points are lower than is usual but they make good progress in lessons. Most gain a GCSE qualification in English, mathematics, and science.
- Effective staff support helps most students moderate their behaviour, attend well and regain the confidence to learn. Good relationships encourage students to recover their self-esteem. The personal development of most is good.
- The headteacher knows the school well, is an effective leader and manager and is effectively improving the school. She has ensured that teaching is good and students' achievements are good.

### It is not yet outstanding because

- Opportunities are missed for students to make the best possible progress because teachers do not always consider their individual learning needs when planning lessons.
- The regulations are met but the range of courses offered by the school is not yet sufficiently broad or motivating enough to encourage all to attend regularly.
- Leaders' evaluations of the school's work are not linked well enough to the regulations and judgements about quality for independent schools. Consequently, leaders and managers are not as accurate as they might be about its strengths and weaknesses and precisely what needs to be improved.

### 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) (Amendments) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection occurred with one day's notice. The inspector met with the headteacher, school staff and two representatives of the local authority.
- The inspector spoke with students, watching them taught by three teachers in five lessons, spending more than three hours in classes.
- Students' work and achievement records were examined.
- Staff views were gained through discussions with them and by examining their questionnaires. There were insufficient responses to the Ofsted on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to make an evaluation but the school's own parental questionnaires were examined.
- Documents and records concerning the management of the school were studied.

## Inspection team

Terry McKenzie, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Assess education is a mixed, independent, special day school which was opened in 2010 when it worked as an alternative provision for education in association with the local authority. It was registered as a school in October 2012 for up to 32 students aged from 14 to 16 years. There are currently 22 boys and girls on roll aged from 14 to 16 years of age.
- The school continues to operate as an assessment centre for displaced students on behalf of the local authority.
- Students are placed here by the local authority following a thorough assessment of their needs. All have experienced periods of prolonged disruption to their education late in their school career which has hindered their preparation for taking GCSE and other appropriate qualifications in mainstream schools.
- Many students have at some point previously demonstrated educational standards that are at least in line with the national averages but upon entry, it is clear that almost all have lost a lot of ground and fallen significantly behind their peers in mainstream schools.
- The school can cater for students with a statement of special educational needs in relation to behavioural, social and emotional difficulties but to date there have been none. Nevertheless, most students experience problems with learning and regular attendance at school in relation to social and emotional difficulties often reflected in their challenging behaviour. A very few are in the care of the local authority. The school sets out to encourage students to overcome their difficulties, manage their behaviour and catch up quickly in their learning so that they can gain the qualifications required to move on successfully.
- The school uses an alternative provision for physical education which takes place at a local sports centre.
- The headteacher is the proprietor of the school.
- This is its first full inspection by Ofsted.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure leaders and managers encourage students to attend more regularly and make the best possible progress in their classes by:
  - introducing a wider range of courses designed to interest and motivate all students
  - encouraging teachers to take more carefully into account the individual needs of students in their lesson planning
  - ensuring that teachers planning indicates what will be learned by each student as well what all are expected to learn and that these goals are communicated to the students.
- Ensure leaders' analysis of how well the school performs is based on the framework of regulations and judgements of quality for independent schools to provide them with a more accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and what might be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Pupils' achievement

**Good**

Students' achievement is good due to good teaching and a good curriculum. Upon entry their standards are usually below average. However, following enrolment, most students attend more regularly and successfully take part in lessons. They begin to make up the lost ground and close the gaps with those in mainstream schools. There is not yet sufficient evidence to show that any outstanding progress is sustained over a prolonged period but students' gains in English and mathematics and science are already good. The improvements in their basic skills of reading, writing and number work are instrumental in helping them gain success in all areas of learning. Students' core skills improve rapidly and most are successful in their GCSE courses. Last year, all of those who attended and remained on roll until the end of Year 11 were successful in gaining GCSEs with a narrow majority obtaining A\* to C grades in mathematics. Almost half of those who entered gained similar higher grades in English and almost all who entered for science obtained A\* to C grades. However, relative to mainstream schools, the number of GCSE passes gained by each student is lower than is usual because currently there are a limited number of examination courses available. Nevertheless, the school is very aware of this issue and new courses are planned for the future.

As the school also operates as an assessment centre for displaced students for the local authority, staff here have gained great skill in assessment work so that when students arrive they are rapidly able to evaluate the potential of each one and to ensure that courses are well matched to students' abilities, needs and interests. As the students gain self-confidence and self-esteem the teachers undertake regular and ongoing assessments to ensure they are making the expected degree of progress in their studies. The targets and challenges provided to students are constantly updated and amended resulting in some achieving well beyond the expectations that they might have had at the beginning of Year 11. Throughout the inspection students were seen to enjoy their studies and contributed well in lessons. The re-establishment of the routines of learning enable them to make good progress in lessons and occasionally their progress is exceptional when teaching is at its best. However, teachers are sometimes too concerned with the activities which are to be undertaken in lessons rather than concentrating on what will be learned by students and this has the effect of sometimes slowing their learning. There are then missed opportunities for more rapid progress to occur.

### Pupils' behaviour and personal development

**Good**

The great majority of students improve their behaviour rapidly upon entry because of the care and guidance of the staff in helping them to do so. Students praise the efforts of staff in supporting them and one said, 'They look after me really well here and that is why I come to school!' The school successfully helps students overcome their behavioural and other difficulties arising from their social and emotional problems. Serious incidents are almost unknown and this is remarkable given students' difficulties and a credit to the work of the staff. They are skilful in conveying to students that the school provides them with a key opportunity to gain qualifications before the age of 16. The great majority of students understand this and begin to attend school regularly. For the great majority their attendance improves dramatically and it is generally maintained throughout their time at the school. Their personal development is good because the school helps the majority to successfully overcome their barriers to learning. The attendance of a few remains low or improves only marginally because they have not yet been sufficiently motivated to attend more regularly and take advantage of courses that would fully engage them.

Provision for promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students learn about the lives and work of others from different backgrounds and cultures through their courses in personal, social and health education that include religious education. Their

citizenship studies ensure they learn about the public institutions and services in England. Students explore the different forms of bullying and how to keep themselves safe. Bullying and harassment are rare here and students trust the staff to resolve any difficulties quickly. The proprietor has made it clear that political and religious extremism will not be tolerated and that balanced views must always be presented to students when dealing with any controversial issues.

### Quality of teaching

**Good**

Teaching is good and ensures students can make good progress. The records held by the headteacher indicate that much has been done since the school was registered to improve the quality of teaching and ensure that it provides students with the opportunities to learn well. The headteacher has acted on advice from external consultants and the local authority. Consequently, and through the use of teachers' appraisal to identify strengths and weaknesses of classroom work, teachers are rapidly gaining even better skills and understanding of how to best meet the needs of this particular group of students. A significant improvement in the last year has been in the way that lessons are planned so that work is better matched to students' interests. Teachers are skilful in motivating students and encouraging them through good role modelling and the excellent relationships that result. However, some teachers still focus too narrowly on the activities which are to take place in lessons and do not focus enough on what it is that students are expected to learn and what progress will be made. Occasionally, teachers spend too long talking to the whole class and miss the chance to challenge each student with individual targets designed to help them to learn more independently. As a consequence, students' learning is sometimes slowed and their concentration drifts.

Teachers mark students' work regularly and provide helpful feedback and encouragement to do even better. Consequently, students value their own efforts and are proud of the work that they produce. Some students stated clearly that they are successful in the school when they have not been previously and that this is because of the close attention that they receive from their teachers in the small classes. One student said: 'This is the best school I have ever been in. The staff understand me here and that is why I work so hard.'

### Quality of curriculum

**Good**

The curriculum is good and enables students to achieve well. It is particularly successful in helping students to make up the ground they have lost and gain the basic skills they need to be able to undertake and do well in examinations such as GCSE. The courses offered to students have been generally well planned by staff to ensure their suitability. Opportunities exist within the timetable for all students to undertake all the required areas of learning. However, students can only gain GCSE qualifications in a limited number of subjects, including English, mathematics, science and history. However, the headteacher is already planning how the curriculum can be further broadened to provide more GCSE courses and other curriculum pathways which match the abilities and needs of all students. For example, Entry Level Certificates are being considered for those of lower ability and access to more practical work in science, design and technology which will motivate others who are currently reluctant attendees.

The successful emphasis on helping students to catch up to fill in gaps in their previous learning is evident by students' achievements in GCSE. All teachers are aware of the importance of reading and encourage students whenever possible to read in their lessons. For example, in a mathematics lesson each student successfully read aloud to the rest of the class about the aspects of the work they were studying. Similarly, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) is embedded in the curriculum and students are encouraged to gain ICT skills and utilise them whenever it is appropriate to do so.

**Pupils' welfare, health and safety****Good**

Pupils' welfare, health and safety are good and all regulations are met. Arrangements for safeguarding are good. Students are well supervised when in school and off site at the sports centre. The required policies and procedures concerning students' welfare, health and safety are regularly reviewed. The required procedures for safe recruitment are in place and all of the necessary checks are made on the suitability of prospective staff, and are included as required on a single central record. Agency staff are not employed. All staff are trained appropriately in safeguarding. The pastoral manager, the designated officer for safeguarding, has undertaken the required higher level of training and attends meetings with other agencies that support and protect children. Good relationships are established between the school and the local authority safeguarding board.

Staff and students know how to report any concerns to the designated person. Through the curriculum, students learn to keep themselves safe in respect of drugs, alcohol and relationships. Clear guidance is provided to staff in the prevention of bullying policy that clearly defines the different forms of bullying and how to deal with it. Appropriate risk assessments are in place to support the health and safety of students when they undertake physical education and for off site visits. The required arrangements for first aid, fire safety and the maintenance of fire fighting equipment are in place. Regular practice evacuations are undertaken and correctly recorded.

**Leadership and management****Good**

Leadership and management by the headteacher are good. She has ensured students achieve well and that all of the regulations for independent schools are met. Much has been done since the school was registered to ensure the quality of teaching is good and improving and that systems are sufficiently robust if staff changes occur. Staff morale is high and supportive of leaders. Procedures have been introduced for managing the performance of all staff in school and these have been successful in ensuring the quality of lessons is steadily improving. In most respects leaders and managers understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and there are suitable plans for future development. However, the strengths and weaknesses of the school could be more easily identified and more appropriate and precise targets for improvement set if the analysis of how the school performs was more firmly based on the framework of regulations and judgements for independent schools.

Good procedures to measure students' standards and potential when they enter the school have been implemented. Progress is reviewed regularly to ensure students are on track to meet their targets and managers are sufficiently skilled and experienced to assist teachers in amending and resetting the challenges presented to students, particularly as they progress through Year 11. Local authority placement officers and others, including parents and carers, value the school and are very impressed with the successes enjoyed by students, particularly in relation to their personal developments and educational advances. The premises and accommodation of the school are entirely suitable. Arrangements are in place to provide all of the required information to parents, carers and others. Procedures for handling complaints fully comply with the regulations.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138878
<b>Inspection number</b>	422836
<b>DfE registration number</b>	341/6003

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Independent special day school
<b>School status</b>	Independent School
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	14–16 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	22
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Dena Robinson
<b>Chair</b>	N/A
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dena Robinson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£7,600
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 735 0036
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