

# Wheelbase

Independent school standard inspection report

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DfE registration number	892/6015
Unique Reference Number (URN)	136095
Inspection number	364371
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Mark Mumby HMI

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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

Wheelbase provides education for boys and girls aged 14 to 19 years. It seeks to improve the life chances of young people, who are disengaged with mainstream education through the use of a flexible and broad curriculum using motor vehicles and motor sport as a focus and context for improving functional skills in English, mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT), and personal and social development. The school is registered as a limited company and an independent charity. It is located close to the centre of Nottingham in the East Midlands. It was established in 1991 and is registered for 32 clients. They may self-refer or are referred by their host school, the local authority or community agencies, such as Connexions. There are currently eighteen full-time and five part-time clients on roll, four of whom have a statement of special educational needs. The school was first registered in April 2010 and this is its first published inspection report by Ofsted.

## Evaluation of the school

Wheelbase provides a good quality of education. It successfully meets its aim of reengaging its clients with education. Clients speak extremely highly of the opportunities that the organisation offers and several commented on how it had changed their lives for the better. There are good procedures in place to ensure the safeguarding of clients, although the organisation's records of staff checks are not fully compliant with the latest requirements. The organisation meets almost all of the regulations for registration as an independent school.

## Quality of education

The curriculum is good. The organisation has implemented a detailed curriculum policy which takes account of the clients' specific needs. It recognises the challenges facing the organisation's particular clientele as well as the specific requirements for those clients with a statement of special educational needs. Schemes of work are planned to develop basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT, alongside the core work about motor vehicles. Detailed schemes of work enable clients to attain qualifications at entry levels 1, 2 and 3 as well as levels 1 and 2 in basic skills. They work towards Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI) qualifications which build on skills ranging from health and safety through the use of tools and equipment to welding

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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)

and fabrication. They are able to attain qualifications in an introduction to vehicle maintenance and repair, and tyre fitting. These vocational elements are planned to prepare the clients for their future lives, but not specifically a career in the motor trade. Clients receive good individual guidance, including the support of a Connexions advisor, to support them towards an appropriate career path. The majority of clients go on to further education in a range of motor vehicle and other trades. Clients have a good understanding about qualifications and many have clear career pathways planned out.

Personal, social and health education is included in the citizenship, life and social skills programme. This provides good preparation for adult life including aspects such as drugs awareness, offending behaviour, sexual health, healthy living, equal opportunities, self-awareness, moving on and financial literacy. A range of visits, such as to the science museum in London, enriches the curriculum.

Teaching and assessment are good, but are stronger in the workshop sessions where clients are more motivated by the opportunities available. Although progress is more rapid in these sessions, they make good progress overall. Teaching has been carefully planned to meet the clients' needs and interests. Workshop sessions leading to vocational qualifications are of the greatest interest to the clients and they respond particularly well in these sessions. Teachers' subject knowledge, particularly regarding motor vehicle courses, is good and they provide clear guidance to the clients. The level of engagement is high in workshop sessions and clients work independently on their assigned tasks showing a good respect for health and safety. In classroom sessions, clients mostly show less interest. Teachers and other adults use appropriate strategies to maintain a satisfactory level of engagement. In particular, a high proportion of adults to clients enables many of them to have one to one support. However, much of the adults' time is spent keeping the clients on task in these sessions, rather than being able to extend their learning through challenging questioning and extended tasks.

Clients develop appropriate basic skills, such as speaking and listening, through well-chosen discussion topics. For example, 'the media' stimulated some forthright comments from clients. However, clients' ability to listen to each other is underdeveloped. Effective use of ICT, including the internet, helps to engage clients in developing their skills. Although they have good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills, they have fewer opportunities to develop their writing skills.

The setting is in a transitional phase as it moves from one assessment system to another. A new system is currently being introduced to assess attainment on entry in English, mathematics, ICT and learning styles. This system is comprehensive and creates an individual learning plan for each client. It is too early for the resulting individual learning plans to be seen in practice. This is an appropriate development to maintain consistency with the organisation's partnership working with the local authority.

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

Clients' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They enjoy the opportunities that the organisation offers them, many stating how much they feel that it meets their needs better than previous settings. They talk knowledgeably about how the courses are preparing them for further education and training including apprenticeships. Clients respect Wheelbase and the staff, appreciating how it has transformed their lives. As one client said, 'I wouldn't be myself, who I am now, if it wasn't for this place.' This comment reflected the feelings of many, as others smiled and nodded in agreement. Opportunities provided at Wheelbase have successfully reengaged clients with learning, increasing their self-esteem and preparing them well for worthwhile future careers. This is reflected in significantly improved attendance for many of these young people compared to their previous settings.

Clients relate well to each other. There is a good level of camaraderie and banter, but incidents of aggression and bullying, which many of them described as typical from previous settings, rarely occur. Most clients have good attitudes in lessons, particularly in the workshop. However, a minority do not consistently conform to expectations in the classrooms or use inappropriate language. This generally does not disrupt the learning of others. Consequently, behaviour is satisfactory.

Clients contribute to the day-to-day running of the organisation through client meetings and a client representative. They have had a positive influence, for example in amending break and lunch times, and in instigating the installation of personal lockers to improve security for their possessions. Good partnership working with universities and the local police contributes to establishing the organisation within the community as well as helping to develop a greater understanding about society. Participation in competitions such as the British Schools' Karting Championship is another example of how the clients are able to engage with the wider community. Citizenship sessions, which include studying about the media, the justice system and political issues, help clients to gain a good understanding about public institutions and British life. The curriculum includes good opportunities to develop clients' cultural understanding. For example, they have benefitted from working with a representative from the Chinese community to experience Thai Chi, Chinese cooking and life in China. A visit to the Holocaust Centre resulted in some very moving artwork from the clients.

## Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for clients' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. The organisation takes good care of its clients on a day-to-day basis but has not ensured that all of its policies and procedures meet current requirements. For example, the organisation has put in place some effective strategies to combat bullying, such as providing opportunities for clients to share their concerns confidentially. Clients say that the staff are vigilant and manage any incidents of bullying well. However, the

organisation's bullying policy does not follow the latest guidance and it does not provide sufficient guidance for staff. Although staff manage clients' behaviour well, the organisation has not prepared a suitable policy for the promotion of good behaviour. The organisation has had good regard to its responsibility for health and safety. Professional advice has been used wisely and a detailed health and safety policy has been implemented. Rigorous procedures are in place to ensure that workshop equipment, such as vehicle lifts, are properly maintained. Appropriate risk assessments have been carried out for the premises and for fire safety. Routine checks with regard to evacuations, testing of fire extinguishers and electrical equipment are all in place. Good attention is paid to health and safety in lessons with staff being vigilant in reminding clients about safety issues such as the wearing of masks and goggles.

The organisation has prepared a suitable policy with regard to the safeguarding of its clients. Staff are appropriately trained in child protection procedures. Clients are supervised well and arrangements for first aid are suitable.

Clients have a good understanding about how to lead a healthy lifestyle, although not all clients take sufficient action to promote good health. Whilst a few talk positively about visiting a gym or participating in physical education, others are less enthusiastic about their health. The organisation has plans in place to introduce measures to address the concerns about the smoking habits exhibited by the majority of clients. Arrangements for hygiene are good and appropriate hand-washing facilities and guidance are provided in the workshop. Clients are provided with breakfast and there is water available during the day.

The organisation has put in place a good range of measures to increase accessibility including ramps, lifts, toilet facilities for the disabled and measures to help visually impaired individuals. It will be putting together a plan to improve access further.

### Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The organisation carries out all of the required checks on prospective employees prior to confirmation of their appointment. Not all of the required details about who has carried out the checks and the date of application for Criminal Records Bureau checks have been included on the organisation's single central record. The organisation has taken immediate action to address this shortcoming.

### Premises and accommodation at the school

The accommodation is spacious and well maintained, providing good facilities for the opportunities on offer. The workshop is maintained in a very clean and tidy state, representing a very good model to the clients. They benefit from the use of a local sports centre for weekly physical education. However, provision has not been made to enable clients to have sufficient outside space for recreation on a more frequent basis.

## Provision of information

The organisation is aware that its existing information for parents, carers and others does not meet requirements. It is, therefore, currently in the process of preparing a new prospectus. At present the information available for parents, carers and others does not provide all that is required about the provision, policies and procedures. Annual reports about children's attainment and progress prepared for parents and carers are satisfactory. The organisation does not provide parents and carers with a copy of its safeguarding children policy, as required by the regulations, either in paper form or through its website.

## Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The organisation has a clearly written complaints procedure which meets the requirements.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.<sup>3</sup>

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 a written policy to promote good behaviour amongst pupils which sets out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving (paragraph 9)
- prepare and implement effective procedures to prevent bullying which have regard to the DCSF guidance Safe to learn: embedding anti-bullying work in schools (DCSF-00656-2007)<sup>4</sup> (paragraph 10).

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

- ensure that the identity of the person carrying out checks and the date on which checks are made, including the date of application for Criminal Records Bureau checks, are included on the organisation's single central record (paragraphs 22(3) and 22(4)).

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

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<sup>3</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made)

<sup>4</sup> [www.teachernet.gov.uk/\\_doc/11908/SAFE%20TO%20LEARN.pdf](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/11908/SAFE%20TO%20LEARN.pdf)

- 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:

- ensure that the following information is made available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils, and on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State, or an independent inspectorate:
  - particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for 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 policies relating to 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
  - particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations
  - 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
  - the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 24(1)(b))
- publish on the organisation's website or, where no such website exists, send to parents of pupils (and of prospective pupils on request) a copy of the organisation's safeguarding children policy (paragraph 24(1)(c)).

## 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	Special		
Date school opened	1991		
Age range of pupils	14–19		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 18	Girls: 0	Total: 18
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 5	Girls: 0	Total: 5
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 4	Girls: 0	Total: 4
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 3	Girls: 0	Total: 3
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,495		
Address of school	10 Newark Street, Sneinton, Nottingham, NG2 4PP		
Telephone number	0115 959 6969		
Email address	mick.clifford@wheelbase.org.uk		
Headteacher	Mick Clifford		
Proprietor	Patrick Rhodes		