

The Ryes School and Community

Independent school progress monitoring 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 inspection was conducted at the request of the Registration Authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan following the previous inspection.

Information about the school

The Ryes School, owned by The Ryes School Organisation Ltd, is located near Sudbury in Suffolk. It opened in 1983 and is a special school registered for up to 31 students, aged seven to 16, who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. At the time of this visit, there were six students registered at the school between the ages of 13 and 16. On the day of this inspection visit, all but one of the students were undertaking adventure activities located at some considerable distance from the school.

As well as providing education, the school has a strong emphasis on developing positive relationships through a therapeutic approach. All students have a statement of special educational needs. Some students have learning difficulties, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or autism. The students are looked after by local authorities which fund the students' places at the school.

The school aims to reintegrate students into the community through developing their ability to make successful choices and decisions, to take responsibility and to move towards independence from a secure and stable base.

Significant changes to the staffing and management of the school have taken place since the last progress monitoring visit in January 2010. In addition, the students no longer live at the school. Another new headteacher commenced at the school at the end of January making this the third headteacher since September 2009. There have been staffing changes among the teaching assistants and a new temporary teacher, responsible for the large majority of teaching at the school, started at the school in September 2010. The school no longer has a class of students with complex learning needs; these are now educated at the company's other school nearby.

Context of the inspection

The school was inspected in July 2005 when it was found to be inadequate. Visits were then made to judge the school's progress in relation to its action plans for improvement. These showed that inadequate progress was being made. It was inspected in April 2008 when it was yet again judged inadequate. Since then three visits have taken place, in February and July 2009 and January 2010. These were to monitor the school's progress; all three of these judged progress to be inadequate.

This is the fourth visit, made to monitor the implementation of the action plan which was accepted in May 2010.

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

The school's new management team has made important inroads in improving the quality of education, largely as a result of an intensive training and induction programme and improved monitoring procedures. The school has made satisfactory progress in relation to the implementation of its action plan. However, one regulation, relating to the school's child protection policy, is still unmet.

At the time of visit in January 2010, the school did not meet the specific needs of students, as outlined in their statements of special educational needs. Not enough account of these taken when planning programmes. The overall curriculum had improved but was not refined sufficiently to meet students' needs; some National Curriculum subjects were not taught, as required by students' statements, and it was not focused on the specific areas in which students needed to improve their skills. This led to inadequate progress.

The school planned to review the curriculum and lesson planning procedures, to train staff in teaching techniques and to monitor the quality of planning and teaching. As a result of implementing its plan, the school is now better placed to meet the special educational needs of students and the curriculum has been reviewed to ensure that these are at the heart of the programmes provided. All aspects of students' statements are included in their individual learning plans. The personalisation of the curriculum, so that each student has their own specific programme, has been successful in improving attendance and students' ability to remain in lessons. Engagement in learning is better because students are more interested in what they are doing. The new 'functional skills' curriculum and resultant teaching plans identify the areas that students need to work on with regard to their literacy, numeracy and information and communication skills. Other subjects, such as science and technology, are fully integrated into individual learning plans.

The last monitoring visit found that teaching was inadequate. Planning and the methods to engage students were limited, there was poor management of behaviour and it was not clear what pupils were to learn. Better use of information and communication technology has aided improvements in teaching. Students' recent work and records show that their progress is improved and most now make satisfactory progress in lessons. Teaching is now satisfactory and ranged from satisfactory to good on the visit. Planning is highly specific in parts, although some aspects do not focus sharply on learning and students are not always fully aware of what they are to learn. Questioning is probing and students enjoy this and rise to the challenge. Students are expected to do much for themselves. Support staff are better equipped to help students and are clear about their roles in lessons. However, they

do not always expect students sufficiently to use their knowledge or to work independently.

Although there was a clear focus on student's improving their personal skills at the time of the visit in January 2010, their self-esteem was low and they did not accept responsibility for their own behaviour. Racist language was used and there was much swearing and times when students were out of class. The school planned a range of strategies to improve students' self esteem, their behaviour, their insights into diversity issues and their involvement in the school community. As a result, students are much more positive about school and about themselves and take responsibility for their own actions. They take seriously their responsibilities with regard to their involvement in the school council. The school's personal, social and health programme now includes well-planned work and is a good foundation for increasing students' understanding of equality, tolerance and diversity.

Students' behaviour at the last visit was unacceptable. Staff did not effectively manage this and the number of exclusions and restraints were high. Relationships between staff and students are now strong and staff are better equipped to deal with difficult situations and challenge any inappropriate behaviour. As a result of implementing the planned improvements in behaviour management, the number of restraints has reduced dramatically and the school's analysis of the students' reward points for good behaviour show that their behaviour is much better. Although there is a satisfactory behaviour policy, and behaviour is satisfactory, students are still not regularly reminded of their targets. The reward system is not refined enough to enable staff to give feedback at regular times during the day, rather than just at the end of the day or the week.

Deficiencies in safeguarding documentation were identified at the time of the visit in January. The single central register of staff checks is now properly completed and meets regulations. However, the child protection policy has not been adequately updated to meet requirements. The school's designated officer is well trained but is not named in the policy; there is no information on the training that staff must undertake, although all are appropriately trained.

Students' health was not adequately promoted because they were allowed to smoke whenever they wished. Lighters are now removed from students and they no longer leave lessons to smoke. A designated area for smoking is used at breaktimes and smoking cessation programme focused specifically on individuals is soon to be implemented.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

As a result of this inspection, the school must take action to meet The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010¹ ('the Regulations'), as follows:

- prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are students at the school in compliance with DCSF guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education* (2007) (paragraph 7).

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2010/1997/contents/made

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special school for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties		
Date school opened	1983		
Age range of pupils	7–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 4	Girls: 2	Total: 6
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 4	Girls: 2	Total: 6
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 4	Girls: 2	Total: 6
Annual fees (day pupils)	£250,000		
Address of school	Ryes Lane Little Henny Sudbury CO10 7EA		
Telephone number	01787 374998		
Email address	office@theyesschool.org.uk		
Headteacher	Martyn Davis		
Proprietor	The Ryes School Organisation		