

Cavendish School

Independent special school standard inspection report

DfE registration number	210/6391
Unique Reference Number (URN)	131237
Inspection number	364254
Inspection dates	10–11 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Michèle Messaoudi

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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

Cavendish School is an independent special school for day students with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. It is located in Bermondsey in the London Borough of Southwark. The school draws its students from a wide range of local authorities in and around London. The school opened in 2000 and moved to its current premises in 2004. There are 31 students on roll, aged between 11 and 16 years, all of whom are boys. All of the students have a statement of special educational needs. Students are of diverse cultural heritages and five are at advanced stages of learning English as an additional language. The school's motto is 'Every Day is a Fresh Start.' It seeks to provide a broad and balanced education for students who have been excluded from mainstream schools and who have experienced considerable difficulties in their lives which have had a damaging impact on their emotions and behaviour and their ability to learn effectively in school. The school aims 'to help them not only benefit from learning but to build up skills and social confidence for the many years of adult life which follows.' The school was last inspected in February 2008.

Evaluation of the school

Cavendish School provides a good quality of education and meets its aims. Significant improvements made since the last inspection result in good teaching and assessment, enabling students to make good progress. The curriculum remains satisfactory although it has some good features. Students' spiritual, moral and social development is good, underpinned by strong pastoral care, robust safeguarding arrangements and good provision for students' welfare, health and safety. Consequently, students feel safe and well supported; their behaviour is good and they develop the basic and social skills which help them prepare for their future. The school meets most of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory with some good features. The provision for literacy is very strong and enables students, most of whom join the school with very low levels of reading and writing, to make rapid progress in these basic skills and access the

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

curriculum. Another strength is the personal, social and health education programme (PSHE) that includes practical sessions to help students address their social and emotional difficulties, especially their anger and behaviour. The curriculum is well balanced between the different areas of learning and the timetable allows enough flexibility to enable students to have one-to-one literacy sessions. The breadth of the curriculum has widened since the last inspection, with the teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) as a discrete subject and the teaching of French to all year groups. However, the school recognises that the breadth of the curriculum is only satisfactory and it is actively looking into providing music and skills-based qualifications. Students' knowledge and skills in English, mathematics, science, physical education (PE), art, food technology and humanities are accredited at Entry or GCSE level. Innovative links between PE and mathematics enable students to apply their numeracy skills to real-life situations. The development of literacy across the curriculum, found to be weak in the last inspection, is now satisfactory. The planning of units of work ranges from satisfactory to good. All the information relevant to the specific needs of students is used effectively to draw up individual educational plans. This personalised planning of education informs the grouping of students, supports those with English as an additional language and enables students who progress faster in certain subjects to take their examinations early.

The school uses links with a broad range of outside agencies effectively to extend students' learning. For example, some students have enrolled on a BTEC course in business and ICT at a local college and others attend the life skills programme run by the London Fire Brigade. Good careers guidance is supported by fortnightly visits from the Connexions service. The curriculum is enhanced satisfactorily by enrichment activities in and out of school. The need for many students to be transported home at the end of the school day prevents after-school activities taking place.

The quality of teaching and assessment has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Good teaching is based on planning that is informed by prior assessments of students and provides tasks that match their aptitudes and needs closely. Teachers work in close partnership with the learning support assistants, ensuring that all students are helped to meet their learning objectives. Teachers use questioning effectively to engage students, build up their understanding and make them think more deeply about the topic. They pitch lessons at a level that stretches all students. There is also some outstanding practice, characterised by a consistently high level of challenge, leading students to progress at a much faster rate. On occasion, the teaching is only satisfactory when resources are not used effectively to build on what students already know, and some of the tasks are undemanding, limiting students' opportunities for thinking and independent writing.

A good assessment framework ensures that initial assessments of students' attitudes to learning, their behaviour and literacy and numeracy skills inform the setting of learning targets which are reviewed every half term. The staff discuss students' progress and needs during daily meetings, working cohesively to ensure that 'every day is a fresh start'. Students receive constructive verbal feedback on their work in

lessons. However, they do not always form a sufficiently clear picture of what to do to improve because the learning targets and the comments written by teachers when marking their work are not always subject-specific and closely related to examination criteria. As a result of good teaching, students make good progress in their learning and in their personal and emotional development. Most make outstanding progress in their literacy skills and leave in Year 11 with examination passes in the most appropriate examinations to secure a college placement.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. The school provides a learning environment that is supportive, warm and friendly with clear boundaries. Consequently, students feel secure and develop good attitudes to learning. Most make good progress in improving their attendance to a satisfactory level from low starting points. Students learn to use strategies to manage their anger and other emotions effectively; as a result, their behaviour is good and instances of bullying are reducing. The staff are strongly committed to promoting good relationships and diversity. Consequently, students work and play together harmoniously. They make good progress in developing empathy and upholding the spiritual, moral and social values required to maintain harmony. Students' cultural development is satisfactory and mainly promoted through the curriculum and a small number of visits to museums and galleries. In humanities, students learn about the major world religions and public institutions.

Students are strongly encouraged to develop the personal qualities that enable them to contribute effectively to their community. For example: the older students take care of the younger ones; students have been designing wooden planters for the local doctors' surgery as well as for the front of the school; they enhance their social skills and develop a keener sense of responsibility when they play matches against a local school or work alongside others in their work experience placements and residential training events; they help to raise funds for various charities. Tutors are committed to helping students to voice their views, although some of the older students tend to dominate. Through the curriculum, pastoral care and careers guidance, students develop the basic skills which they need for their future economic well-being.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for the students' welfare, health and safety is good. All the policies and procedures aimed at safeguarding students and minimising risks are implemented consistently. The child protection policy is detailed, providing clear guidance to staff and useful support to fulfil their responsibilities. Appropriate references are obtained on all staff and their employment history is checked. The staff receive the full range of appropriate training to promote students' welfare and well-being. Pastoral care has strengthened since the last inspection and, as a result, tutors support students more effectively to develop good patterns of behaviour and students feel safe. Staff know and understand students' emotional needs well and provide very good levels of

supervision. The school works in effective partnership with outside agencies to ensure that the students' individual needs are met. The anti-bullying policy and procedures have been developed to a good standard since the last inspection. The first-aid policy has been upgraded and now provides clear guidance to staff. The school monitors students' attendance effectively and works hard to reduce the level of persistent absenteeism over time. However, the managers do not feel sufficiently well supported in this respect by all the local authorities that place students. The school fulfils the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended.

Students develop a good understanding of healthy lifestyles through PSHE, the drugs awareness programmes and science. The school routinely provides three nutritious meals a day, at times that meet students' varying needs well, and access to fresh water and fruit. Students have good opportunities for regular exercise and most make good use of the on-site fitness equipment.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

Robust recruitment procedures ensure that all the required checks on the proprietor and staff are carried out in good time. These checks are appropriately recorded in a central register.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The premises provide teaching accommodation that is fit for purpose and enables students to learn in a safe and secure environment. Since the last inspection, an ICT suite has been installed and the school is seeking additional premises to widen the curriculum further. Good use is made of the adjacent park for physical exercise.

Provision of information

The school publishes a wide range of information for parents and others, including a website, an information pack, curriculum booklets and newsletters. Parents and carers receive two interim reports and one full annual report on their children's progress, and they have three formal annual opportunities to meet their children's teachers. The parents and carers who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire are mostly positive about the school's work. While the school has remedied some of the deficiencies noted in the last inspection report regarding the quality of information provided, it still fails to provide specific information as listed at the end of this report. Although the school provides the local authorities who place students with a document detailing the provision included in the fees before students enrol, it does not submit to them an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred in respect of those students as a matter of course. Not all of the funding local authorities feel sufficiently informed by the school.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has rectified all the weaknesses highlighted in the last inspection report and now has suitable procedures for handling complaints fairly and promptly. However, it does not comply with one recent requirement, as indicated at the end of this report.

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.³

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

- provide parents and others with specific information related to the educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs and for pupils for whom English is an additional language; also make available the details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 24(1)(b))
- publish on its website or send to parents of pupils (and of prospective pupils on request) a copy of its safeguarding children policy as required under part 3, paragraph 7 (paragraph 24(1)(c))
- where a pupil who is registered at the school is wholly or partly funded by the local authority, submit to that authority an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred in respect of that pupil (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 that the complaints procedure stipulates 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, and is available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the headteacher (paragraph 25(i)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- widen the curriculum to serve the needs of all students more closely and further promote their cultural development

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made

- help students to gain a clearer understanding of how to improve their work through comments in marking and through learning targets that are subject-specific and closely related to examination criteria.

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 day school		
Date school opened	September 2000		
Age range of pupils	11–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 30	Girls: 0	Total: 30
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 31	Girls: 0	Total: 31
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 3	Girls: 0	Total: 3
Annual fees (day pupils)	£24,750		
Address of school	Lady Gomm House 58 Hawkstone Road London SE16 2PA		
Telephone number	020 7394 0088		
Email address	info@cavendish-School.net		
Headteacher	Mrs Sara Craggs		
Proprietor	Mrs Cheryl Stepton		