

Ripplevale School

Independent school progress monitoring inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Michael Best
Social care inspector	Liz Daniels

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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, and under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools or residential special schools.^{1,2,3}

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

Ripplevale School is a residential special school which opened in 1970 and, since its recent acquisition of a former village school building, is now located on two sites in the village of Ripple, close to Deal in Kent. It is owned by the directors of the Ripplevale School Company. It has a capacity to 60 boys, aged from seven to 16. All pupils have statements of special educational needs related to either social, emotional and behavioural difficulties or autistic spectrum condition. Some pupils have a combination of these special needs and others have additional learning needs related to literacy. There are currently 41 boys on roll, of whom nine are weekly boarders. All pupils are referred by their local authorities. Approximately one quarter of pupils are looked after children. The majority of pupils have experienced a fragmented education as a result of their special educational needs. For the majority, their attainment on entry to the school is well below average.

The school's stated aims are 'To provide good quality education... to maximise the full potential of each pupil within a caring and nurturing environment... with a moral code which emphasises personal responsibility and consideration of others through a partnership between pupils, parents and carers, and staff'.

Context of the inspection

The school underwent an integrated inspection by Ofsted in November 2009. Following this inspection, the school submitted an action plan outlining how it intended to address the regulations and National Minimum requirements that were judged not to be met. The school's original action plan was evaluated in April 2010 when some, but not all, of its proposals were accepted. A revised action plan was submitted and evaluated in June 2010 and, again, not all the proposals were accepted. This is the first monitoring visit to check the school's progress in

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

³ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga_20000014_en_1

implementing its action plan. This visit took place at the same time as a full social care inspection of the residential provision.

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

The inspection in November 2009 found that a number of students' statements of special educational needs required that they have full access to the National Curriculum and occasionally to specific programmes related to autistic spectrum disorder. However, there were no opportunities for students to study a modern foreign language and few timetabled lessons for individual support. The school submitted an action plan to address these shortcomings which was evaluated, but not accepted, in April 2010. This proposed that the school would make provision for the teaching of French. However, it was noted that there were no timetabled lessons providing individual support for students where this requirement was identified within their statements. The plan was not accepted. The school submitted a second action plan which was evaluated but again not accepted in June 2010 as it did not fully address the shortfall.

This visit found that the regulation is now met. Timetabled lessons providing individual support are now provided. These cater for the specific needs of all pupils with a statement of special education needs and include provision for specific programmes related to autistic spectrum disorder. Since the last inspection, the headteacher has developed a spreadsheet showing all the identified needs of students from their statements and from the school's own observations. Supporting documents guide the provision for individual students through suggesting possible strategies and approaches for dealing with behavioural and learning issues linked to students' difficulties. Students highlighted for additional support with literacy and numeracy have all been assessed and individual programmes have been written to guide support. A speech and language therapist has recently started working at the school and is in the process of screening students and providing programmes for teachers and support staff to implement. The scheme of work for French, based on commercial schemes that have been adapted to meet the needs of students, has been implemented and assessment systems established. A good level of enthusiasm from both teachers and students is promoting students' good progress in learning French.

The inspection in November 2009 found that the best lessons included different levels of work for different abilities; however, this was not apparent in all lessons. The school has implemented its action plan by putting in place training for staff, with the aim of improving their planning and teaching skills. It has recognised the varying levels of expertise among its staff to differentiate teaching and to devise effective strategies in teaching students with autistic spectrum disorders. This training has been provided from in-house expertise as well as external sources.

This visit found that the regulation is now met. The school is effectively disseminating good practice among its staff and improving the quality of learning by its students. An important contributory factor is that staff now have access to more detailed records and guidance that support their planning and teaching of lessons. The school recognises that some students have high capabilities and is using early entry GCSEs to challenge students. The school is responding well to students' personal needs, interests and preferences, particularly in improving their reading skills.

The inspection in November 2009 found that the school did not send financial information annually to referring local authorities. The school submitted an action plan which was evaluated in April 2010. The school's intended response was to send the required information to those local authorities who wished to receive it. The plan was not accepted because to comply fully with the requirement, the school should send this information, whether or not the authority indicates that it wishes to receive it. The school submitted a revised action plan which was evaluated and accepted in June 2010. This visit found that the school now meets this requirement. Statements of income and expenditure for individual students are sent to their funding local authorities together with a summary copy of the company's accounts.

A number of National Minimum Standards (NMS) were not met at the time of the inspection in November 2009. These included: ensuring that information on notice boards in the school offices did not breach students' rights to privacy; ensuring that written records relating to behaviour incidents included the effectiveness and consequence of any physical intervention; keeping a record of the administration of non-prescription medicines for individual students; linking a particular fire door to the electronic fire alarm so that in the event of a fire it would unlock automatically; modifying windows to ensure that they have restricted opening and monitoring the restrictors on all windows; noting the names of all those taking part in an emergency evacuation and keeping this information with the details of each fire emergency practice. The social care inspection that took place at the same time as this progress monitoring visit found that all these standards had been addressed and were met. However, the inspector found that the school does not secure and follow qualified medical, pharmaceutical or nursing advice in a written protocol on the provision of non-prescription 'household' medicines to children.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school has made good progress and its educational provision now meets all regulatory requirements.

In order to meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools, the school should:

- secure and follow qualified medical, pharmaceutical or nursing advice in a written protocol on the provision of non-prescription 'household' medicines to children (NMS 14.8).

School details

School status	Independent
Type of school	Special school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and/or autistic spectrum conditions
Date school opened	1970
Age range of pupils	7–16 years
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	41
Number of boarders	9
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	41
Number of pupils who are looked after	9
Annual fees (day pupils)	£27,630
Annual fees (boarders)	£62,457
Address of school	Chapel Lane Ripple Deal Kent CT14 8JG
Telephone number	01304 373866
Email address	info@ripplevaleschool.co.uk
Headteacher	Mr Ted Schofield (Principal) & Mrs Valerie Miller (Headteacher)
Proprietor	Mr Chris Danican and Mr Clifford Davies