

Dane House

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Caroline Broomhead HMI
Social care inspector	Michelle Moss

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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}

An inspection of the care provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the national minimum standards for children's homes. This inspection took place at the same time but the full report is published separately on Ofsted's website and should be read in conjunction with this report which covers the educational registration of the school.

Information about the school

Dane House opened in March 2006 and is a children's home which provides education for up to three pupils aged 10 to 16 years. The school's aim is to provide a safe and secure environment for vulnerable young people. The school is owned by CastleCare group which specialises in working with young people who have complex emotional and behavioural difficulties. Of the three young people resident in the home, one is currently on the school roll; the others have previously been on the school roll. There are currently no pupils on roll with a statement of special educational needs but there have been in the recent past. The school was last inspected in December 2007. Recent changes to staffing include the company's head of education and the teacher for the school. The last social care inspection took place on 7 January 2010.

Evaluation of the school

Dane House provides a satisfactory quality of education which results in pupils making satisfactory progress in their learning and personal development. Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory and the school meets nearly all regulations; it meets all those relating to safeguarding. The school has taken positive steps to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The overall quality of boarding was judged to be good.

Quality of education

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum which is based on the National Curriculum and places a strong emphasis on basic skills and personal, social and health education. Curriculum planning draws on published schemes of work for the different key stages and units are selected to be relevant to pupils' ages and interests. The school recognises that opportunities for pupils to undertake practical

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

activities in subjects such as science are limited due to the on-site accommodation and senior managers are planning to offer lessons at other schools within the company where specialist facilities and teaching expertise are available. The school also has good links with local mainstream schools which enhance the curriculum offered.

Pupils can achieve accreditation through unit awards and, if they attend a mainstream school, can take GCSE courses. The school is rightly seeking to extend the range of accreditation offered to take full account of pupils' needs and abilities and to ensure that all courses offer suitable challenge and progression.

Teaching and assessment is satisfactory. Lessons are taught by the teacher for half of the week, supported by a member of care staff. The care staff run lessons for the rest of the week, following work set by the teacher. The company is training its care staff to NVQ Level 3 as learning support assistants (LSA), which is a positive step and one which is giving these staff more confidence in their role. LSAs are encouraged to obtain evidence of tasks pupils have completed, such as written work, but the reports from these sessions focus mostly on the pupils' attitudes or concentration and rarely give information about whether they have met the learning objectives.

Due to the changeover of staff in the summer this year, there are some gaps in planning for individual needs. The school is beginning to tackle this issue and is becoming clearer about pupils' barriers to learning and how staff can plan for these to be overcome. Individual education plans include targets for behaviour and learning but these vary in quality and are not always shared with care staff so opportunities are missed to promote consistency and progress across the 24-hour curriculum. The care staff encourage pupils to attend school and to take an interest in their education. They use their particular skills effectively to promote pupils' enjoyment and participation in activities, for example, in physical education. Also, some life skills, such as making meals, are taught effectively in the home setting.

In lessons, relationships are generally positive and pupils receive good individual guidance which encourages them to find ways to solve problems, to reinforce previous learning and to take some responsibility for their own progress. However, teaching is mainly through discussion and the use of textbooks and worksheets with insufficient change of approach to maintain pupils' interest and take account of their short concentration span. Modelling works well, for example in information and communication technology (ICT), where the LSA and pupil had their own laptops and worked together sharing ideas and solving technical difficulties.

Resources are adequate although access to the internet connection has been difficult at times and, where planning has not taken sufficient account of this, lessons have been disrupted. The classroom is bright and attractive but can feel quite cramped when there are three or more people in there. The school uses other parts of the home effectively for teaching, such as the kitchen for food technology. Also the

wider community is used well to provide a broader range of learning experiences, for example pupils use the local library for research and to access the internet.

The school uses a commercial package which is helping staff to assess and track small steps of learning and to identify any gaps in knowledge and skills. Learning is also assessed against the completion of units, such as AQA and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) unit award schemes.

The pupils usually come to the school with gaps in their learning, often due to having missed schooling, and consequently their attainment is below that expected for their age. While at the school they begin to make satisfactory progress, although their learning and achievement is hindered when they refuse to engage with education or arrive late for lessons. The formality associated with taking examinations can be a significant barrier to them gaining external accreditation, particularly at GCSE. However, pupils are proud of their other achievements, such as the certificate in first aid which one pupil gained through their work at an after-school club.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The school works hard to build up pupils' self-esteem and self belief. Opportunities are provided for them to learn about different faiths and to follow their own faith where relevant. The pupils become increasingly aware of their own and others' emotional needs and can be quite tolerant at times. Pupils were seen to engage constructively in discussions about recognising signs of stress and how to help overcome this should it occur.

Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory and reflects a general willingness to take some responsibility for how they behave and a reasonable understanding of right and wrong. The pupils are well aware of the school's rewards and sanctions and say that these are fair. 'Golden time' on Friday afternoons is an opportunity for them to choose their own activities if they have achieved sufficient points. Levels of attendance, punctuality and cooperation in lessons can vary from day to day with consequent impact on learning and progress. Pupils show that they can be courteous and polite, for example, when meeting visitors.

Wherever possible, pupils are encouraged to attend mainstream school classes. This can be a big challenge for some, but with good support from staff, they can overcome their initial anxieties and go on to achieve success, for example, in attending regularly.

Pupils learn about their own and other cultures through, for example, studies about different countries and their histories, beliefs and ways of life. They visit places of interest such as Liverpool cathedral, the theatre and museums, all of which broaden their knowledge and awareness of the wider world. The school is planning to develop a more structured programme to support this aspect of its work because it recognises that at present these activities are organised on a more informal basis.

Pupils are able to take part in a youth forum organised by CastleCare group, but do not always choose to do so. They are also encouraged to make choices affecting their everyday lives, such as joining sports clubs, which help them to develop their social and communication skills as well as promoting their independence and physical development. Through attending events such as careers conventions and having individual discussions with staff, the pupils begin to consider what they might like to do when they leave school.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. There are good levels of supervision which ensure that pupils benefit from individual guidance and protection whilst at the same time encouraging their independence. Handover arrangements are effective in ensuring that staff are aware of any changes to routine or pupils' needs and this promotes consistency in daily practice. Any incidents are dealt with in line with company policy and recorded appropriately. Arrangements for the different aspects of health and safety such as medical care, first aid and fire safety, meet requirements. The pupils show an interest in learning about keeping themselves healthy and safe and generally take heed of the advice they are given. The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

Child protection arrangements are robust. Staff are fully aware of their safeguarding roles and responsibilities and training is up to date. While there is general agreement between staff about how individual pupils' behaviours need to improve, detailed behaviour programmes have not been drawn up to make clear the agreed targets and how these are to be achieved across education and care. The school takes bullying seriously and ensures that staff and pupils understand how any incidents will be dealt with.

The company has provided clear guidance on how off-site educational visits should be organised, however, these procedures are not carried out in practice. Although staff assess the risks posed to individual pupils before going off site, this in itself is not sufficient to meet regulations. For example, the planning does not make clear the educational purposes for such visits and their links with the curriculum, as would be expected. Also, other information is not always recorded such as whether the places to be visited have been checked beforehand by staff.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The company has robust staff recruitment arrangements in place for checking all staff before they start work in the school; these meet requirements. All checks are duly recorded, as required, on a single central register.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The school has good access to local transport and community facilities. The premises are maintained to a good standard. However, the classroom is compact and only adequate for two pupils with complex emotional and behavioural needs to be taught at any one time with two adults.

Provision of information

As the school is part of the larger CastleCare group, most of the information for parents and placing authorities, such as the prospectus, is available from the head office and some is available on the company's website. These arrangements are satisfactory. The school provides regular reports for placing authorities about pupils' education.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

Arrangements for dealing with any complaints fully meet requirements. There have been no formal complaints in the past year.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The care provision was judged to be good. A full report on the care provision is available on Ofsted's website and should be viewed in conjunction with 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 provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

- ensure that there are effective measures to ensure pupils' health and safety on educational visits which have regard to DfES guidance *Health and safety of pupils on educational visits* (DfES ref: HSPV2) (regulation 12).

Please see the report on Ofsted's website relating to the care provision in the children's home which should be read in conjunction with this report.

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

What the school could do to improve further

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

- provide further training for learning support staff to enable them to recognise and report on how well pupils meet their learning objectives
- extend the range of teaching approaches used to help maintain pupils' interest in lessons
- share individual behaviour and learning targets across care and education to promote further progression.

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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The quality of boarding provision

Effectiveness of boarding provision		✓		
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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special		
Date school opened	March 2006		
Age range of pupils	10-16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Number of boarders	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Annual fees (boarders)	£215,000 to £243,000 per annum		
Email address	rburrows@castlehomes.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Mary MacKinnon		
Proprietor	CastleCare Group		