

Gloucester House School, The Tavistock Children's Day Unit

Independent special school standard 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 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

Within a single setting, The Tavistock Children's Day Unit, also known as Gloucester House School, provides both a health and education service. It is located in the London Borough of Camden but serves several neighbouring boroughs. The unit, funded by the National Health Service (NHS), offers a range of integrated provision for a small group of pupils between the ages of five and 12 years, all of whom have exceptionally complex social, emotional and behavioural needs. Its published purpose is to provide stepping stones towards long-term stable education for the pupils, avoiding if possible, extended institutionalisation. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and are referred by local authorities. The school aims to provide for pupils for no longer than three years and to support the pupils' transitions to long-term placements to cater for their individual needs. Outreach and multi-disciplinary services support pupils and their families throughout the transitions, whether to local schools, both mainstream and special, or to residential provision.

The school opened in 2007 and was last inspected in January 2008, shortly after the provision separated from a partner residential school. Currently there are no girls on roll and 13 boys between the ages of seven and 12. Of these, two pupils are in Year 7.

Evaluation of the school

Gloucester House School provides a good quality of education and care that matches its stated aims well. The quality of teaching and assessment is good. The rate of pupils' academic progress is good, as is their personal development, particularly when considering the degree of their behavioural, emotional and social disturbance, and the extent of underachievement when they join the unit. Staff work effectively to ensure the safety provision for the unit as well as the health and welfare of the pupils. Safeguarding measures are robust. The unit complies with the majority of the regulations but has not improved the accommodation since the last inspection.

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

Quality of education

The good curriculum meets the aims of the unit well. The main strength of the curriculum lies in the way that the personal and social education programme is tailor-made to suit the needs of individual pupils. Group work and specialised treatment packages along with individual behaviour plans enable at least half of the pupils to work towards a successful transition to their next stage of education in mainstream schools. There is, therefore, necessarily a stronger emphasis on therapies to support the pupils' personal development than that given to their basic skills. Nevertheless, all pupils make good progress, and some make particularly good progress in literacy, especially reading. Records show that in all cases, progress is significantly faster than that before joining the unit.

The pupils follow a balanced academic programme which allows time for therapeutic work so that they do not miss out on studies. Parents' and carers' involvement in therapeutic programmes are very carefully planned to obtain the maximum benefit for the pupils. The good emphasis on speaking and listening helps pupils to communicate their needs increasingly effectively. All pupils have opportunities for science and technology as well as for a range of aesthetic and creative experiences and physical education. French and music are taught as discrete subjects and specialist staff offer weekly music sessions. Group 'nurture sessions', facilitated by clinicians and teachers working together, are particularly successful in enhancing the pupils' ability to play. There are no opportunities, however, for enrichment activities outside of the school day or school term, partly because pupils often live at great distances from the unit.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall, although lessons, and therefore pupils' learning, can be interrupted by the unpredictable behaviour of individuals. Those few pupils who complete the national tests at the end of Year 6 often achieve or exceed the National Curriculum levels expected for their age group, reflecting their good progress in making up earlier losses. Staff work collaboratively in all lessons so that pupils regularly experience models of good working relationships and cooperation. Teachers are skilled at managing a range of behaviours, helped by the high level of support readily available as need arises. This does not always, however, ensure that pupils respond positively to activities in lessons, including group work. The severity of the pupils' needs means that, on occasions, their behaviour deteriorates and interrupts their own and others' learning. Lesson planning is very detailed in that daily activities are orchestrated for each pupil. These do not always challenge the more-able pupils well enough, however, partly because they are not based securely on the detailed assessment and recording of earlier learning in lessons. Since the last inspection, the unit has increased its new technology resources. These are used increasingly confidently by teachers but the arrangements within the classrooms do not always allow them to be used to the best advantage.

Assessment information is carefully collated by staff so that the progress of individuals is tracked termly. However, in lessons, teachers and support staff do not have easily manageable procedures that allow them to note pupils' small steps in learning. Nonetheless, the systematic use of information on pupils' growth in the understanding and management of their behaviour is used effectively to evaluate the success of therapeutic interventions for pupils. Such records demonstrate a high success rate in reintegrating pupils into more standard educational provision.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The unit makes good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. By the time pupils leave the unit, many have made sufficient progress in their social skills and understanding of relationships to return to mainstream education. A key mechanism of the provision is the rewards and consequences system, a self-evaluation process that engages the pupils with a virtual bank book of returns for targets met. This helps the pupils to grow in independence, self-awareness and self-esteem. Attendance is generally regular and much improved for most from before joining the unit. All pupils enjoy at least some, if not all, aspects of the school day. The unit's changing population means that at any one time several are at the very early stages of their programmes. This results in a wide range of behaviour patterns among the pupils, with some still showing high levels of disturbance. Thus, overall, the pupils' behaviour is satisfactory, a genuine demonstration of their good progress in personal development.

Pupils have a growing understanding of the impact of their actions on others, evident in the school council meetings where they learn to accept that the views of others matter and can begin to contribute to the school community. The school council also provides a helpful forum through which the pupils have opportunities to explore traditions and civic organisations. It is often linked with a short period of reflection which also forms part of 'circle time'. The unit strives to inculcate a sense of stillness in the young people in its care, sometimes through group meditations but also through personal prayer. There are good opportunities for pupils to learn about the traditions of cultures other than their own as in their telling of the Christmas story through using other languages. There is a strong emphasis on promoting tolerance and harmony between the pupils themselves and between staff and pupils so that they understand that 'people are different' and that respect is due to all.

The unit supports pupils very carefully in their moves to the next stage of education and its tracking information indicates a high measure of success with some gaining accreditation beyond that expected for Year 11 pupils in mainstream education. Thus, many are able to prepare effectively for their future economic well-being.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for the pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. There is a high level of commitment among the staff to promoting the pupils' safety. Arrangements for

safeguarding pupils are robust and are reviewed regularly along with regular risk assessments and all safeguarding and child protection policies. Staff have very regular child protection training and are carefully inducted on all procedures relating to restraint. There are systematic checks on the suitability of staff to work with children. The unit deals very effectively with issues of bullying, as need arises. The education and behaviour support plans are well geared to supporting the development of good behaviour patterns and to helping pupils to understand that actions have consequences. Other psychiatric support and therapies help pupils to confront and manage any emotional traumas over time. A main plank of the unit's work, the involvement of parents and carers in the pupils' programmes, is very effective over the long term.

Pupils are encouraged to keep healthy through personal, social and health education, science and citizenship. Through daily activities at break times, as well as through physical education at the local sports centre, there are good opportunities for physical activity. Mobility access to the ground floor for the disabled is adequate but more specific facilities such as disabled toilets are unavailable. The proprietor plans to move to new premises as soon as a suitable property is available. In the interim, the unit has a three-year plan to meet the requirements of the Disability and Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

Procedures for staff checks are carried out systematically and records are up to date, including the single central register. These arrangements meet all of the requirements.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The unit's premises and accommodation are adequate. Although the building is safe, it is badly in need of redecoration. Any refurbishment has been postponed because of plans to move to a new building as soon as possible, an intention also expressed at the time of the last inspection. Teaching rooms are of a suitable size for the numbers on roll and are well lit and reasonably ventilated. These are well resourced, as are the specialist facilities for science and food technology. There is a good range of smaller rooms for counselling and one-to-one sessions. However, the medical room also doubles as the nurture room. There is a readily available sink but the furnishings make it unfit for purpose. Washroom accommodation is appropriate. The small hard play area has been thoughtfully resourced with climbing frames, together with attractive wooden structures – the Stage and tree house. These were designed by the teachers and pupils and are helpful in encouraging adventurous play. The fabric of the building has not improved significantly since the last inspection and this leaves the impression of facilities that are shabby, and, in places and in some respects, unhygienic.

Provision of information

The unit has good communication procedures. Parents and carers are regularly informed as to the pupils' progress. Detailed information is contained in the prospectus and increasingly on the unit's website. Those parents and carers who returned questionnaires recorded general satisfaction with contacts between themselves and the unit. However, two parents were concerned about the lack of provision outside of term time. The unit's self-evaluation in preparation for the inspection provides a reflective and broadly accurate overview of all aspects of the provision.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The unit's complaints policy and procedures are satisfactory and comply with the regulations.

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 premises of and accommodation at schools (standards in part 5) and must:

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, in accordance with regulation 5 of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 23(k))
- ensure that classrooms and other parts of the school are maintained in a tidy, clean and hygienic state (paragraph 23(m))
- provide a satisfactory standard and adequate maintenance of decoration (paragraph 23(p)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Develop manageable and systematic procedures to record the small steps in pupils' learning in their daily lessons.
- Ensure that the most able pupils are challenged as effectively in their academic work as in their personal development.

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

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	2007		
Age range of pupils	5–12		
Gender of pupils	Boys		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 13	Girls: 0	Total: 13
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 13	Girls: 0	Total: 13
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 3	Girls: 0	Total: 3
Annual fees (day pupils)	£78,000		
Address of school	33 Daleham Gardens, London NW3 5BU		
Telephone number	020 7794 3353/ 020 8938 2070		
Email address	nnicholson@tavi-port.nhs.uk; rsaunders@tavi-port.nhs.uk		
Headteacher	Ms Nell Nicholson		
Proprietor	Ms Angela Greatly, The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust		