

The Old School House

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	David Young
Social care inspector	Sarah Oldham HMI

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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

The Old School House, part of the Chartwell Group, is located in a children's home and registered to teach a maximum of six boys, aged nine to 13 years, with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school is awaiting approval for a change of age range to cater for boys aged 11 to 16 years. There are currently three students on roll aged between 12 and 14 years, all of whom have statements of special educational needs. Students are placed here by a variety of local authorities; all have experienced extremely challenging situations leading to break downs in schooling and often family life.

The school aims 'to provide a small family setting for young people, in a safe, structured and stable environment which affords them positive experiences, freedom, privacy and choice.' The school was first registered in April 2002 and was last inspected in February 2008. The last full inspection of the residential provision was in December 2010. A short 'interim' inspection of how well the residential provision keeps children safe was conducted by an Ofsted social care inspector at the same time as this education inspection. As a result, this report does not provide an overall judgement on boarding.

Evaluation of the school

The Old School House provides a good quality of education for its students. There have been good improvements to planning for the curriculum and the quality of teaching since the last inspection. The school now meets all the regulations. Arrangements for the personal development of students are good and benefit from a well-managed relationship between the school and the home. The safeguarding of students is good because of a high priority given to all aspects of health and safety. The school meets its aim to provide positive experiences, as a result of which

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

students state that they enjoy school and this view is endorsed by parents and placing authorities.

Quality of education

The curriculum and range of learning experiences provided for the students are good. The school is successful in ensuring that the requirements of students' statements of special educational needs are met by teaching all subjects of the National Curriculum. French, for example, has been introduced for all students and is linked successfully to their summer holiday in France. The school ensures that where additional provision, such as speech and language therapy is required, suitable arrangements are in place. Since the last inspection, and in response to recent progress monitoring visits, the school has made good progress with all aspects of planning for teaching and assessment. The headteacher has ensured that planning for all subjects is managed in a way that ensures clarity about intended learning outcomes. New planning arrangements are working successfully for the teaching of physical education and cookery. Appropriate commercial schemes have been introduced for teaching French and music. As a result, both teachers and students are clear about intended outcomes for their lessons and students' learning is evaluated in all subjects. Students benefit from a good balance between academic and practical learning. Literacy and numeracy are given a high priority. There are often gaps to be filled in students' prior learning which means that they are making satisfactory progress from relatively low starting points. Students enjoy opportunities to work with wood and metal in their design technology lessons and have produced artefacts which are of a high quality. Parents recently thought that a wooden lampstand produced by a student had been manufactured commercially. The school and home work well together to provide additional opportunities for students to experience enjoyable recreational activities tailored to their interests, such as horse riding and bowling. The involvement of residential staff in the life of the school provides important continuity in expectations and students' cooperation. The school also has plans to develop closer working relationships with other schools in the group, to provide greater opportunities for students to socialise and learn together.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall. Teaching is good and managed successfully by the headteacher who ensures that the contributions made by teaching assistants and residential social workers are appropriate to the needs of the students. Lessons are well planned and students are made aware of their learning targets. Good quality resources are used, including stimulating use of the interactive whiteboard, and students' project work is mostly presented to a high standard. Lessons are conducted at a good pace and the occasional unwillingness by individual students is managed appropriately, ensuring that the learning of others is not unduly disrupted. Students find the work challenging and are expected to contribute at a level of intensity and concentration which they find demanding. Lessons are mostly broken down into a series of varied activities which enable students to maintain interest and motivation. Gaps in students' previous knowledge and understanding inhibit their faster pace of progress. However, there is evidence of gradual improvements in their comprehension of concepts and their willingness to

commit their ideas to paper. Weaknesses in literacy skills are slowly being overcome, enabling students to complete entry level accreditations successfully. Staff working with students do not always have a consistent repertoire of skills for responding to students' weaknesses in reading and writing. The headteacher recognises this to be a priority for continuous staff development. When students are self-motivated, as in practical activities and aspects of their ASDAN (Award Scheme Accreditation and Development Network) programme, the pace of learning accelerates and progress is good.

Attention has also been given during the current school year to improvements in the arrangements for assessing and recording students' progress. This is work in progress and the headteacher is testing a variety of strategies, particularly for recording students' successes, to ensure that their progress may be measured. Assessment is now linked more rigorously to national standards, including National Curriculum levels. The school recognises that it has not yet fully mastered the measurement and recording of small steps in progress in literacy and numeracy.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Arrangements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students are good. The school and home work successfully together to create common expectations for behaviour and attitudes. They are largely successful in improving attitudes to learning and respect for staff. As a result, students' behaviour in school is mostly good. On entry to the school, students' self-esteem and confidence are not high. The development of strong personal relationships and trust enables students to make progress in their commitment to the values of the school. The staff encourage students to reflect on their attitudes and to take personal responsibility for their behaviour. Attendance at school by both residents and day students is above average with virtually no unauthorised absence. Students state in their questionnaire responses that staff care about them and explain how they may achieve more. They enjoy school, even though they often find the requirements of the classroom demanding.

Personal, social and health education is taught through a number of timetabled lessons. There are good opportunities for the development of students' understanding of personal relationships and of the demands of life beyond school. Students are provided with appropriate work experience or college placements and, as a result, one student recently gained employment and a part-time college placement on leaving school. Aspects of the ASDAN and life skills programmes introduce students to local community services and an understanding of democratic processes. Students contribute to the local community, for example, through a recent project to clear up the local children's play area. Timetabled lessons on ideas, beliefs and customs provide students with good opportunities to learn about diversity in the local and wider community.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school makes good provision for the welfare, health and safety of students. Thorough procedures for the recruitment and training of staff ensure that child protection and safeguarding policies are implemented fully. An integrated approach to all aspects of safety between the school and the home provides additional effectiveness in the implementation of policies. All staff are trained in child protection and in first aid. Routines for the updating of training are secure. Students acknowledge through their questionnaires that the school helps them to live healthily and that they feel safe in school. Fresh fruit, for example, is readily available in the dining room and students take part in regular physical activity. Fire safety arrangements are implemented thoroughly and risk assessments, together with routine checks on all safety equipment, are completed appropriately. Any health and safety risks are identified and dealt with immediately. The school has an effective three-year plan to improve accessibility to the premises, the curriculum and information.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

All required checks on the suitability of staff and proprietors are completed and recorded in a comprehensive single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

There have been good improvements to the school accommodation since the time of the last inspection. The accommodation is spacious enough and appropriately laid out to support learning. The premises are decorated and maintained to a high standard. In addition to the main classroom, students have access to a well-planned, suitably equipped workshop. The workshop is well supervised with a strong emphasis on safe working practices. Off-site access to suitable sports facilities enhances the experience of students. Students at the school have access to appropriate areas of the home's accommodation during the school day, including the dining room and recreational areas.

Provision of information

The provision of information for parents and carers is clear and sets out the purposes and aims of the school and the residential provision effectively. Parents and carers are made aware of the availability of all required policies and additional information. Thorough information is provided for the review of statements of special educational needs and social care reviews. Parents and carers are kept informed of students' progress through annual written reports and an annual open day.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a recently revised policy for the management of complaints which meets statutory requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

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.

What the school could do to improve further

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

- ensure that all adults working with students implement an extended range of strategies to improve all aspects of literacy, particularly handwriting, spelling and punctuation
- ensure that recent developments in the assessment of progress are consolidated and extended to produce reliable measures of the extent of progress made by individual students.

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	Residential special
Date school opened	3 April 2002
Age range of pupils	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 3
Number of boarders	Boys: 2
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 3
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 2
Annual fees (day pupils)	£57,000
Annual fees (boarders)	£179,400
Email address	TOldschoolhouse@aol.com
Headteacher	Bernice Jackson
Proprietor	Deborah and Chris Wright